

THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

January
2020

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

TM

“Bigger, bolder and more epic.”

EMPIRE, Ben Travis

“A visual knockout.”

FORBES, Scott Mendelson

Disney
FROZEN II
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE
BEST ORIGINAL SONG “INTO THE UNKNOWN”
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
KRISTEN ANDERSON-LOPEZ and ROBERT LOPEZ



“‘The Lion King’ is proof that Jon Favreau is among the best filmmakers working in Hollywood today”

Forbes – *Mark Hughes*

“This extraordinary movie is so visually stunning... ‘The Lion King’ creates an African savanna of breathtaking photorealism.”

Newsday – *Rafer Guzman*

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
IN ALL CATEGORIES

Disney
THE
LION KING

Best Picture

Jon Favreau, p.g.a.

Jeffrey Silver, p.g.a.

Karen Gilchrist, p.g.a.

January
2020

ANIMATION MAGAZINE™

Warner Bros' Harley Quinn: A Thoroughly Modern DC Heroine

+
Blue Sky's Spies in Disguise
Shinkai's Weathering with You
Xavier Riddle's Secret Museum
& Much More

Sergio Pablos' Klaus Delivers the Gift of 2D Animation

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and gorgeous animation.”**

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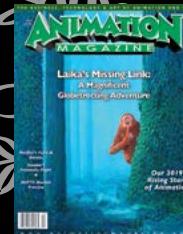
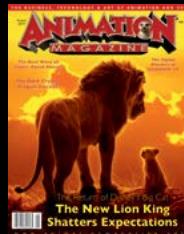
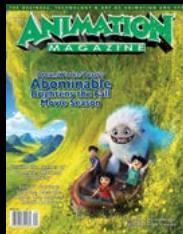




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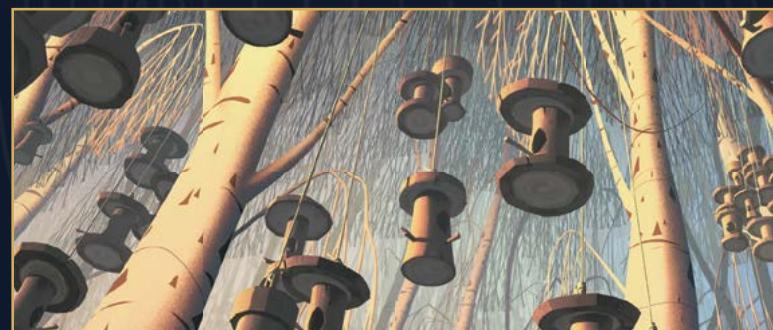
RADIO TIMES



COMICBOOK.COM



DAILY



“ONE OF THE YEAR’S BEST.
A rich and gorgeous treasure.”

IMDB

“A HAND-DRAWN MARVEL.”

THRILLIST

Klaus



MIRROR



COMMON SENSE MEDIA



MOVIEGUIDE

For Your Consideration

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE



“A GAMECHANGER.”

INDIEWIRE

"A FRESH PERSPECTIVE AND PLENTY OF MAGIC."

The animation and production design are stunning. Breathtakingly beautiful sequences. The startlingly profound and moving message we're left with is a universal one: If we care for nature and animals with compassion and understanding, there's a larger, unseen magic that just might reveal itself to you and through you."

Los Angeles Times

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM

Produced By
Suzanne Burgy p.g.a.

Producer
Peilin Chou

Written & Directed By
Jill Culton

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

Production Designer
Max Boas

Art Director
Paul Duncan

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Jill Culton

BEST FILM EDITING

Pamela Ziegenhagen-Shefland ACE

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

Rupert Gregson-Williams



DREAMWORKS

ABOMINABLE

PEARL

universalpicturesawards.com

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UNIVERSAL

"ANOTHER BEAUTIFULLY ANIMATED TRIUMPH FOR LAIKA."

A VISUAL TREAT WITH LOTS OF HUMOR
AND PLENTY OF HEART."





FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING

**BEST ANIMATED
FEATURE**

**MISSING
LINK**



For more on this extraordinary film and a schedule of where you can see it on the big screen, go to www.missinglinkguilds.com

A
ANAPURNA
ENTERTAINMENT

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Jérémie Clapin
Marc du Pontavice

BEST DIRECTOR

Jérémie Clapin

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Jérémie Clapin, Guillaume Laurant

BEST FILM EDITING

Benjamin Massoubre

BEST SOUND MIXING

Jérôme Wiciak

BEST SOUND EDITING

Manuel Drouglazet

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

Dan Levy

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

"You're The One" Performed by S+C+A+R+R
Music & Lyrics by Dan Levy
Arranged and produced by Dan Levy

"THE BEST ANIMATED FILM OF THE YEAR."

IndieWire

I LOST MY BODY



WINNER
CANNES CRITICS' WEEK
GRAND PRIX

WINNER
COLCOA FILM FESTIVAL
AUDIENCE AWARD

WINNER
COLCOA FILM FESTIVAL LAFFA
CRITICS AWARD

WINNER
ANNECY FILM FESTIVAL
CRISTAL AWARD

WINNER
ANIMATION IS FILM FESTIVAL
GRAND PRIZE

WINNER
NEW CHITOSE AIRPORT INTERNATIONAL
ANIMATION FESTIVAL FEATURE FILM
GRAND PRIX AWARD

"EXTRAORDINARY AND DREAMLIKE."

RollingStone



**"ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL AND CREATIVE
ANIMATED FEATURES I'VE EVER SEEN."**

VARIETY



NETFLIXGUILDS.COM



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by Jake S. Friedman

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30 A Torrent of Talent

Japanese auteur Makoto Shinkai discusses his career and the acclaimed new feature *Weathering with You*, which arrives in U.S. theaters next month via GKIDS. By Charles Solomon

Cover A: Sergio Pablos' Netflix feature *Klaus* is a gift to fans of 2D animation.

Cover B: *Harley Quinn* delivers a new kind of heroine. © Warner Bros. Entertainment & DC Comics

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'Kid Demand' and the Climate
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Ending the Year on a Green Note

One of last month's biggest news stories was the long-anticipated launch of Disney+, which was significant in so many different ways. The new streaming service, which costs only \$7 per month, registered 10 million subscribers on its first day. The good news sent the Mouse House's stocks jumping over 6% to an all-time high on Nov. 13, and led insiders to predict the number of subscribers to hit 35 million by the end of 2020.

The service, which offers a rich library of film and TV titles from Marvel, Lucasfilm, Pixar and National Geographic, has been dominating the pop culture chatter in social media, mostly thanks to the well-received Star Wars series *The Mandalorian*, which is penned by Jon Favreau, Dave Filoni, Rick Famuyiwa and Christopher Yost and is set five years after the events of *The Empire Strikes Back*. The \$120 million-budgeted series stars Pedro Pascal, Carl Weathers, Werner Herzog, Gina Carano, Nick Nolte and Giancarlo Esposito, but its most popular star is not a human actor: It's an adorable cucumber-colored character identified as "Baby Yoda" by fans.

There are lots of theories about the identity of this delightful creature: Could he be Yoda's child? Is he a clone of the long-gone Jedi Master, or is he a new addition to the Yoda clan? We will probably know the answer by the time this issue lands in your hands. The urgent question is, how soon before we can put a Baby Yoda plush toy on our living room couches or beds? (In case you need to have one right now, we found a wonderful six-inch version on etsy, which sells for about \$50!)

Of course, animation fans have been diving into the Disney vaults to catch up with some of their favorite animated series and movies from yesteryear. There has been a lot of interest in the old Disney afternoon classics, especially from die-hard fans of older toons such as *Gargoyles*, who are very vocal

about their demands for a feature version or reboots of their favorites.

Some of the older content on the streaming service comes with a warning for modern audiences living in a more inclusive time. Classic animated features such as *Dumbo*, *The Aristocats*, *Lady and the Tramp* and *The Jungle Book* offer a disclaimer noting that "This program is presented as originally created. It may contain outdated cultural depictions." Many of these animated movies have been criticized for their racist characterizations. Unsurprisingly, Disney's 1946 *Song of the South* is not available for streaming on the service. Also, there was so much noise about the correct aspect ratio of *The Simpsons*, that Disney+ promised to offer earlier seasons of the show in their original size and presentation in 2020.

As predicted, we are witnessing significant developments in the world of streamers that really impact the way animation is produced and consumed. One of them, of course, is our cover story, Sergio Pablos' *Klaus*, which has quickly become one of the favorite underdog stories of the year. Who knows how the success of this charming, beautifully animated feature will impact the number of 2D movies in the pipeline in the near future? What makes us happy is that everyone seems to be embracing the chances the talented director and his team at SPA studios and Netflix took with this venture. We hope to see more of this trend in 2020 and beyond.

Finally, on behalf of all of us here at *Animation Magazine*, I would like to wish you a wonderful holiday season and a terrific new year. Here's to having more thrilling surprises like Baby Yoda and *Klaus* in our future.

Ramin Zahed
Editor in Chief
ramin@animationmagazine.net

"Sonic the Hedgehog just spent \$35 million redesigning its main character to look more appealing. Cats could have done something similar. But, no, it's still going with Dame Judi Dench, a cat, wearing a coat made of cat fur. Even though it's the most disturbing thing you or I have ever seen."

— *The Guardian* reacts to the latest trailer from the upcoming movie *Cats*



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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST SHORT FILM (ANIMATED)

SITARA



January Planner

1 Happy New Year! Get 2020 off to a productive start by casting your **Annie Awards online ballot!** (Deadline: Jan. 12)

2 Academy members: Start casting votes for **Oscar nominations** today! (Deadline: Jan. 7)

5 Find out the Hollywood Foreign Press's pick for best toon of 2019 at the **77th Golden Globe Awards**, hosted again by Ricky Gervais. [goldenglobes.com]

10 Opt out of winter and into incredible short films at Australia's **FlickerFest**, returning to beautiful Bondi Beach for its 29th edition for 10 choc-a-bloc days. [flickerfest.com.au]

13 We'll be up early to catch the **92nd Academy Awards nominations announcement!** Final voting begins Jan. 30.

16 Enjoy a week of great films and desert sunshine at **ShortFest** in Palm Springs, CA. [psfilmfest.org]

17 Robert Downey Jr. puts a new spin on Hugh Lofting's interspecies interlocutor in **Dolittle**, written and directed by Oscar winner Stephen Gaghan (*Syriana*).



18 The accolades keep coming as the **31st Producers Guild Awards** takes over The Palladium tonight. [producersguild.org] Also, *Winnie the Pooh* author **A. A. Milne** was born on this day in 1882.

21 International content market **NATPE Miami** kicks off its three-day 10th anniversary event. [natpe.com/miami]



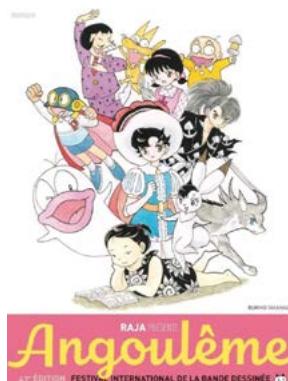
23 Bundle up and head to Park City, UT for the illustrious **Sundance Film Festival**, running through Feb. 2. In the mood for something different? Check out Park City's alternative film fest, **Slamdance** Jan. 24-30. [sundance.org | slamdance.com]



25 All the stars of Toon Town align tonight at the **47th Annie Awards!** [annieawards.org]

30 The place to be for visual narrative fans this week is the **47th BD**

Angoulême, held in the "World Capital of Comics" and UNESCO Creative City. This year should be extra incredible, as France's Ministry of Culture has declared 2020 the "Year of Comics"! [bdangouleme.com]



Angoulême
RAJA REGGAE
47^e ÉDITION FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA BANDE DESSINÉE
25 JANVIER - 2 FÉVRIER 2020

31 Part two of the sixth and final season of **BoJack Horseman** debuts on Netflix. Keep a bottle on hand and your therapist on speed dial. Also, **Justin Timberlake** (*Trolls*' Branch) is 39 today!

To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail mercedes@animationmagazine.net.

"A HUGELY AMBITIOUS SEQUEL, JOYOUS AND GENUINELY COMPLEX, THAT'S CHARGED WITH DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL ENERGY TO THE VERY LAST FRAME."

JOE MORGENTERN, *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM

Produced by
DAN LIN, p.g.a. PHIL LORD, p.g.a.
CHRISTOPHER MILLER, p.g.a.
ROY LEE JINKO GOTOH, p.g.a.
Directed by
MIKE MITCHELL

BEST DIRECTOR

MIKE MITCHELL

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Screenplay by
PHIL LORD & CHRISTOPHER MILLER
Story by
PHIL LORD & CHRISTOPHER MILLER
and MATTHEW FOGEL

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

RÉGIS SCHULLER

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

PATRICK MARC HANENBERGER

BEST FILM EDITING

CLARE KNIGHT, ACE

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

CO Supervisors
EMMANUEL BLASSET
JOHN RIX

BEST SOUND EDITING

Supervising Sound Editors
ETHAN VAN DER RYN ERIK AADAHL

BEST SOUND MIXING

Re-Recording Mixers
MICHAEL SEMANICK
GARY SUMMERS
NATHAN NANCE
Original Dialogue Mixer
CARLOS SOTOLONGO

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

"NOT EVIL"

Written by
JON LAJOIE

Performed by
TIFFANY HADDISH

"CATCHY SONG"

Music by
JON LAJOIE, DILLON FRANCIS,
JAMES RUSHENT

Lyrics by
JON LAJOIE and ALAYA HIGH

Performed by
DILLON FRANCIS feat. T-PAIN
and THAT GIRL LAY LAY

"SUPER COOL"

Music by
BECK HANSEN and
DAVID GREENBAUM

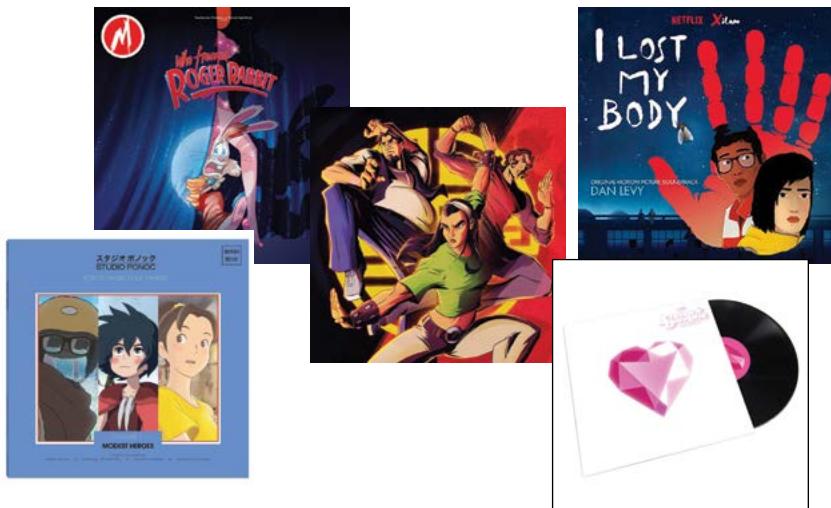
Lyrics by
BECK HANSEN, AKIVA SCHAFER,
ANDY SAMBERG, JORMA TACCOME

Performed by
BECK feat. ROBYN &

THE LONELY ISLAND

The Animation Lover's Holiday Gift Guide

We got our shoppin' muscles warmed up last month with a double spread of books, playthings and must-own movies. Now it's time to do some serious noodling about what to get for every fan on your list! There are so many great toy innovations, creative licensed collectibles and stylish fashion pieces out there to choose from — if you don't find the perfect gift in these pages, we hope you at least find inspiration!



For the Real Page-Turners:

Crisis on Infinite Earths Box Set

Join the Justice League, the Justice Society, the All-Star Squadron, Infinity Inc., Superman, Green Lantern and countless other heroes as they give their all to save the DC Universe in this epic 14 volume box set! [DC Comics, \$500]

The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance — Inside the Epic Return to Thra

Discover how Jim Henson's Creature Shop, legendary character and costume designer Brian Froud and director Louis Leterrier brought Thra and its characters to life alongside the artists and puppeteers who are continuing the legacy of the original film. [Insight Editions, \$50]

Dragon Ball: A Visual History

The definitive journey through the artwork of one of the most influential and popular manga series of all time — featuring stunning full-color artwork, exclusive creator commentary from Akira Toriyama, and rarely-seen sketches. [VIZ Media, \$35]

Marc Davis in His Own Words: Imagineering the Disney Theme Parks

This two-volume set includes more than 1,500 Imagineering



archives pieces from the '60s-'80s (most never before published). For the first time, the park pioneer's design theories and stories of working with Walt are featured in his own words, as recorded during hours upon hours of interviews by author Chris Merritt. Oscar winner Pete Docter is co-author. [Disney Editions, \$150]

Marvel: The Golden Age 1939-1949

Five Marvel milestones! Three sovereign super heroes! One exclusive collection! Including a facsimile of the extremely rare *Marvel Comics #1!* Selected & introduced by Roy Thomas. [The Folio Society/Marvel Comics, \$225]

The Queens of Animation: The Untold Story of the Women Who Transformed the World of Disney and Made Cinematic History

As the influence of Walt Disney Studios grew — and while battling sexism, domestic abuse and workplace intimidation — the women profiled in these pages infiltrated the "boy's club," tackled new technologies, created amazing art and fought to transform the way female characters are depicted. Based on extensive interviews and exclusive access to archival and personal documents, bestselling author Nathalia Holt, Ph.D. reveals the vital contributions made by these pioneering figures, from Disney's Golden Age to the record-shattering *Frozen*, Disney's first woman-directed feature. [Little, Brown & Co., \$30]

For the Maestros:

I Lost My Body

Dan Levy, MP3 Album
[Lakeshore Records, \$9.50]

Modest Heroes: Ponoc Short Films Theatre, Vol. I

Tri-color vinyl LP; 500 unit LE
[Mondo, \$25]

Seis Manos

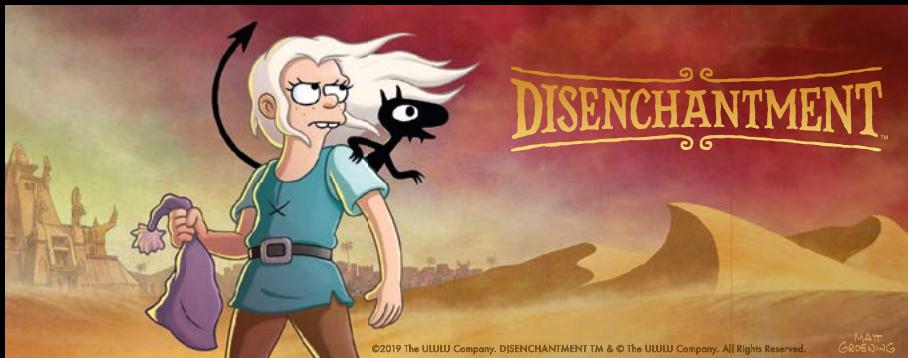
2 LP Set (colored or black vinyl)
[Mondo, \$35]

Steven Universe: The Movie

Deluxe Vinyl 3 LP Set
[WaterTower Music, \$50]

Who Framed Roger Rabbit

Alan Silvestri; "Jessica Rabbit" color vinyl LP
[Mondo/Walt Disney Records, \$25]



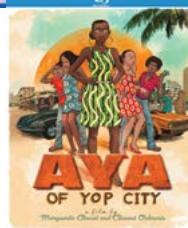
FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST ANIMATED SERIES

For the Popcorn Addict:*Abominable*

Written & directed by Jill Culton, DreamWorks/Pearl's magical adventure follows a girl named Yi and her friends as they seek to return a lost yeti cub to his family – discovering how brave they are inside and where they truly belong. Includes DWA short *Marooned* and tons of bonus features. [Universal, \$30 | \$35 BD | \$45 4K]

*Fruits Basket - S1 Pt. I Limited Edition*

Enjoy the first 13 episodes of the classic anime as reimagined and directed by Yoshihide Ibata. Follow the bizarre life of Tohru, who is saved from life on the streets by the Soma clan – a curious bunch who transform into animals of the Zodiac when hugged by the opposite sex. The LE set includes three art cards and a trio of adorable resin Rat, Ox and Onigiri figurines! [Funimation, \$85 BD]

*Aya of Yop City*

This French gem directed by graphic novelists Marguerite Abouet and Clément Oubrerie finally gets a NorAm release! Aya is a 19-year old living in a lively neighborhood of 1970s Abidjan, Ivory Coast. She and her friends follow Plan C: Combs, Clothes and Chasing Men! But big trouble comes when one of the BFFs realizes she's pregnant, and the baby's father is the spoiled son of a very powerful man. [Kino Lorber/GKIDS, \$30 | \$45 BD]

Batman Beyond: The Complete Series

Fully remastered on Blu-ray for the first time, relive Terry McGinnis' incredible 52-episode adventure as the inheritor of the Batsuit and the keeper of peace in Gotham City. Set includes the movie *Return of the Joker* as well as tons of legacy and new bonus features. The fully equipped utility box also packs an exclusive metallic Funko POP! and four lenticular art cards. [Warner Bros., \$100 BD]

Funan

Denis Do's powerful, deeply personal feature directorial debut takes us back to 1970s Cambodia, where a young woman's family is torn apart by the Khmer Rouge. As she adapts to the regime's grim new reality, she remains determined to reunite with her little son.

Includes an interview with Do as well as art gallery and storyboards. [Shout!/GKIDS, \$27 BD]

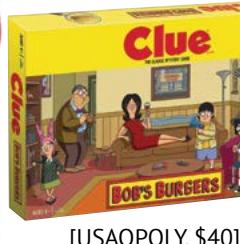
No takers? How about *Family Guy S17*, *Game of Thrones S8*,



Good Omens, Mai Mai Miracle BD Collection, *Millennium Actress* BD, *The Pink Panther Cartoon Collection Vol. 6, The Simpsons S19, Star Trek Discovery S2, Teen Titans: The Complete Series or Young Justice: Outsiders S3.*

For Kids Big and Small:**Buzz Lightyear Star Command Center**

[Jakks Pacific, \$120]



[USAOPOLY, \$40]



[Build-A-Bear, \$35]

Frozen II Mystery Minis

[Funko, \$8 each]

**Monopoly: Animaniacs**

[WBShop, \$40]

Clue: Bob's Burgers
SpongeBob SquarePants Dissected Vinyl Figure
[Mondo Exclusive, \$155]



Scooby-Doo & Haunted Mansion Funko Pop! Town [WBShop, \$30]



Anatomy Park Operation
[BoxLunch, \$35]

[FurReal/
Hasbro,
\$100]



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IMAGINATION

•— CHANGE YOUR —•

PERSPECTIVE

SVA
NYC

Art by: Daily Crawford



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For the Discerning Decorator:



Game of Thrones House Sigil Pint Glass Set [HBO Shop, \$46]



Pottery Barn x The Simpsons "Donut" Bedding [\$89]

Rick and Morty Portal Gun Light [BoxLunch, \$45]



She-Ra and the Princesses of Power Watercolor Prints [Crystal Canvas @ Amazon, \$20]



Star Wars Death Star Toaster [Williams-Sonoma, \$50]

Steven Universe: Opal Giclee Print by Jack Hughes [Mondo, \$40]



For the Style Maverick:



Buzz & Woody BAIT Reebok Shoes [\$200]

I Am She-Ra Juniors Hoodie with Cape [Mighty Fine, \$30]

Kiki's Delivery Service Jiji Beanie [Hot Topic, \$17]

Loungefly X Felix the Cat 100th Anniversary Kisslock Bag [\$72]

Nike x Olivia Kim Betty Boop Air Max 98 [Nordstrom, \$190]

Pokémon Scorbunny Jersey [Pokémon Center, \$55]

RWBYS Ruby Rose Cosplay Hoodie [Rooster Teeth Store, \$60]

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse Miles Cosplay Jacket [Hot Topic, \$75]

Star Wars x Robert Graham The Falcon Sport Shirt [\$348]

Steven Universe: The Movie Upside Down Heart Gem Tee [Cartoon Network Shop, \$30]



For Your
Consideration

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The Original Animaniacs Toonsmith

Randy Rogel looks back at his career and writing music for the classic Warner Bros.' series.
by Jake S. Friedman



Go ahead—go to YouTube and type in a search for “Yakko’s World but.” You’ll find yourself in an endless slew of fan remixes. Add up the individual views of each video, and it’s possible that “Yakko’s World” is the most replayed song online. But I can’t be certain—I have been scrolling down the list of remixes since I started writing this article, and I have yet to reach the bottom.

The original “Yakko’s World,” a brief musical clip that originally aired in 1993 during the first season of *Animaniacs*, lists all the nations of world in rhyming verse. It was written by Randy Rogel, who went on to pen most of the songs for *Animaniacs* (and the follow-up series, *Histeria!*). We all know that *Animaniacs*, which aired its final episode in 1998, is being rebooted with original episodes on Hulu (stay tuned for summer 2020). What many fans may not know is that, along with original voice actors Rob Paulsen, Jess Harnell, Tress MacNeille, Maurice LaMarche (Yakko/Pinky, Wakko, Dot and the Brain, respectively), Randy Rogel has also been tapped to help pen several new tunes. Like before, some songs are a classroom educator’s dream, while others are

‘I go back and forth between the rhythm and the melody, and I ask myself, is this funny? Is this a good piece of work? You have to be brutally honest with yourself, because if it doesn’t work for you, it’s definitely not going to work for anybody else.’

— Actor, writer & musician Randy Rogel

character-specific. Other veteran composers include Julie and Steve Bernstein, protégés of the original show’s music director, the late Richard Stone. They’re in good hands with showrunner Wellesley Wild, previously a writer and producer for *Family Guy*.

But Rogel’s route to showbiz is more circuitous than most. He was born in San Diego, California in 1954 and broke into local theater at a young age. Before he graduated high school, he had performed in myriad professional shows at venerable venues like The Old Globe and Circle Arts Theatre. These hosted national tours starring television stars of the day, including traveling productions of Sid Caesar’s *Show of Shows*, Borscht Belt comedian Jan Murray, and Bob Hope contemporary Marilyn Maxwell. The impact was undeniable. “I got my training and my exposure to great material of the old classic Broadway style, which is now the style I write in,” says Rogel.



He then decided to put theater on hold. “For some reason that I can’t explain, the military academies appealed to me.” His application was accepted to

both West Point and the Air Force Academy. “I chose West Point because it seemed the more prestigious to me. I left musical theater to pursue an education and to see the world as a military officer.” Rogel had no misgivings about West Point. Each year the senior class writes and performs a campus musical called *The Hundredth Night Show*. Rogel wrote the show for his class. “It was a resounding success and I thought, hey, maybe I’m good at this writing thing,” he says.

An Officer and a Thespian

Rogel was among West Point’s graduating class of 1976, which cohort which produced more U.S. generals — the officers who led the charges into Iraq and Afghanistan — than any other in American history. Following graduation, Rogel was posted to Italy as a field artillery officer in the combat arms. “I did my graduate work while I was in Europe and took

Randy Rogel and Rob Paulsen are pictured in this poster art for *Animaniacs in Concert* by animation veteran and artist Alan Bodner, who also created the illustration opposite.



a degree in International Relations – basically political science – from Boston University. Including West Point, that gave me a total of 10 years of military service.” When he graduated, he went corporate. “Corporations love junior military officers because they all know about chain-of-command and lines-of-communication, and we weren’t used to working for a lot of money. Proctor & Gamble hired me and moved me to Seattle.”

There he was working in sales, but he also started auditioning. “I was cast pretty quickly in several shows and I soon began working non-stop as an actor; it started getting in the way of my regular job.” Soon Rogel asked himself, “Twenty years from now, what will I want to have done with my life?” I knew that I wanted to work in film and television.” Rogel had already earned a couple promotions before he quit, drove to L.A., slept on a friend’s couch, and auditioned while submitting writing samples. He landed a job at Warner Bros. in early 1991, writing the acclaimed *Batman: The Animated Series*.

Under the guidance of showrunner Alan Burnett, the series was an instant hit. Down the hall, Steven Spielberg’s team led by executive producer Tom Ruegger was wrapping up *Tiny Toon Adventures* and developing *Animaniacs*. Rogel told them that he should work on the new *Animaniacs* show. “They told me, ‘No, you write that dark sh*t and *Animaniacs* is a comedy!’”

Rogel’s mother had bought his young son a globe for his birthday. “I sat with him, showing him the countries of the world – here’s United States, Canada, Mexico, Panama – when it occurred to me that this

might make an interesting song. When I was auditioning to write for *Animaniacs*, I thought that song about all the countries might be fun for the show, so I submitted it to Tom Ruegger. He liked it and showed it to Steven Spielberg. He liked it and they had me write another one listing all the states and their capitals. They liked that one, too, and next asked me to write a song about the entire universe. I thought, ‘Jeez guys, we can do more than list songs;’ so I began to write other songs like ‘I’m Mad,’ ‘Variety Speak,’ ‘I’m Cute,’ et cetera.”

So how does he go about crafting a song? “I try to ask myself, ‘What’s the heart of the song?’” Rogel explains. “And that basically gives you a hook. That hook begins to suggest a rhythm to me, and then I go down that track. Maybe it will begin to suggest the beginning of a melody. At that time, I probably have lots and lots of lyrics in my head as I’m writing down little clever things. I go back and forth between the rhythm and the melody, and I ask myself, is this funny? Is this a good piece of work? You have to be brutally honest with yourself, because if it doesn’t work for you, it’s

definitely not going to work for anybody else.”

He uses familiar, public domain melodies for informational songs, and original melodies for the others. After all, it’s far more clever to fit the list of the U.S. presidents into the well-known measures of the *William Tell* Overture than to write a melody around the list. Sometimes, though, he makes exceptions. One of his songs for *Animaniacs* about the deadly earthquake of 1994 was put to Schumann’s *The Merry Farmer*, just for ironic contrast.

Winning Formula

Occasionally there was push-back from network execs. “They said, ‘These songs will be over the kids’ heads, and we should be writing more like *Barney*,’” recalls Rogel. “I remember saying, ‘No, no, kids are a lot smarter than you think they are, and we should write up to them.’ Tom Ruegger and certainly Stephen Spielberg really supported that idea.” Combine that with the timeless influence of golden age Broadway, and you have a show with a soundtrack that never grows old.

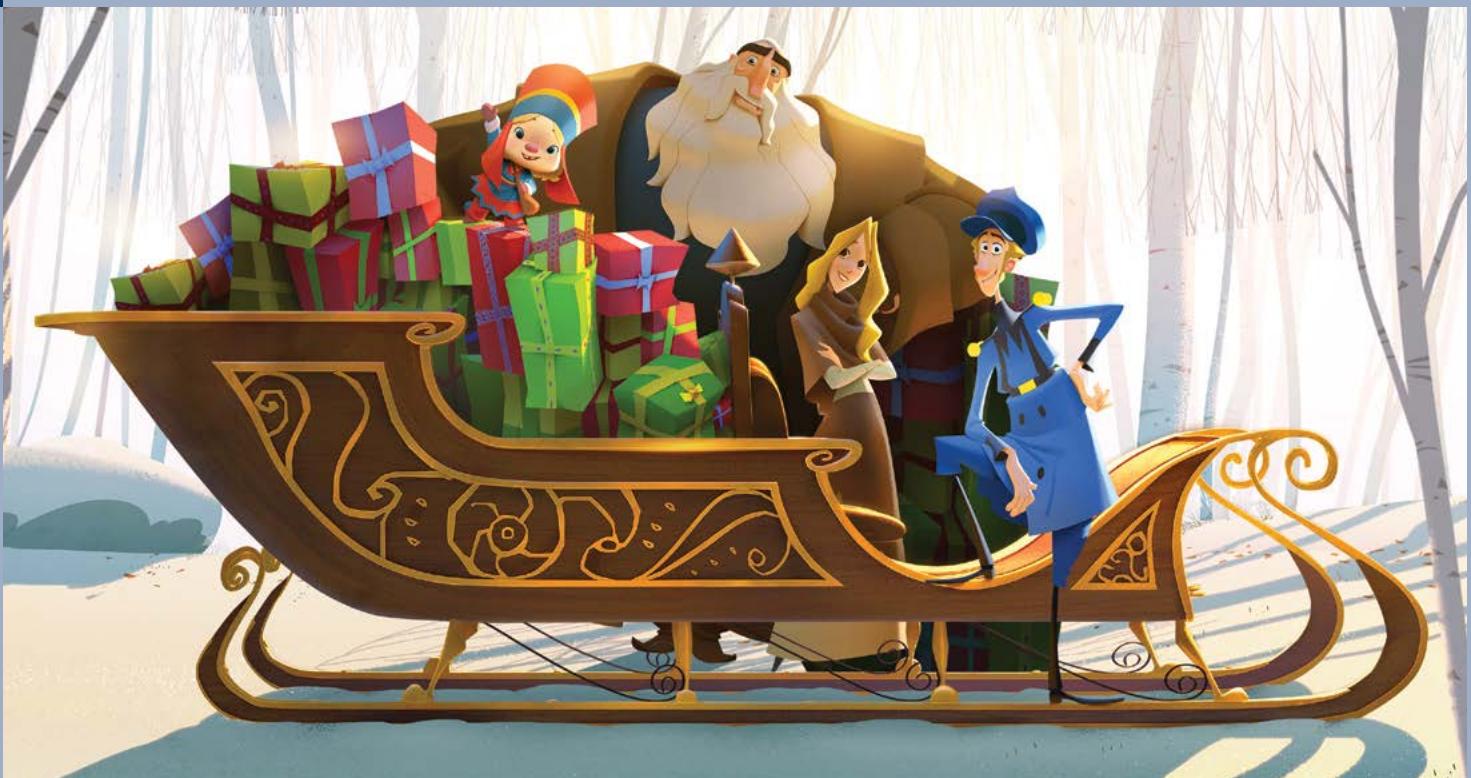
Rogel went on to win three Emmys (10 nominations): two for his work on *Animaniacs* and another primetime Emmy for his writing on *Batman*. He has also won two Annie Awards: one for the *Batman & Mr. Freeze: Subzero*, and one for his music on *Histeria!* He received the Peabody Award for his work on *Animaniacs*. In addition to writing and composing, he continued performing – Rogel has played Cosmo in 26 different productions of *Singing in the Rain*. He continues to work in animation, and has written for a wide variety of shows, including Disney’s *The 7D*, *The 99*, *1001 Nights* and, most recently, Big Bad Boo’s acclaimed Hulu show *The Bravest Knight*.

For the last few years, Rogel has also been touring with Rob Paulsen in a show aptly titled *Animaniacs in Concert*, performing songs from his cartoon oeuvre. It’s not to be missed (this writer has seen it three times and counting). He is currently balancing all that with the development of an original off-Broadway stage musical.

But the real question is, what does Rogel think of the countless remixes of “Yakko’s World”? He responds, “I’m blown away, especially by the one that uses clips from different movies. That one deserves an Emmy of its own.” ♦



Jake S. Friedman is New York-based author, teacher and artist. His book on the Disney Afternoon cartoons will be released in 2020. You can find out more at JakeSFriedman.com.



Santa Begins — in Glorious 2D!

How director Sergio Pablos and his team of gifted artists at SPA studios re-imagined the myth of Santa Claus and restored the glory days of 2D animation with *Klaus*.

By Ramin Zahed

Nine years ago, veteran animator Sergio Pablos had a great idea: The world knows so little about the origin story of Santa Claus. Why and how did this legend of the big-hearted toymaker came to be? Pablos, a well-respected animator who worked on Disney's *Tarzan*, *Hercules* and *Treasure Planet*, created the *Despicable Me* franchise and started his own studio (Sergio Pablos Animation) in Madrid, Spain, finally saw his vision come to fruition as the movie *Klaus* opened in theaters and premiered on Netflix in November.

Interestingly enough, Pablos actually decided to look into the origins of Santa Claus after seeing Christopher Nolan's 2005 movie *Batman Begins*. "I really liked the way Nolan took the lore of an outdated character and made it relevant for modern audiences with *Batman Begins*," says the helmer. "I thought it would be an interesting exercise to do a similar thing for popular characters from literature, folk tales and history. I considered Drac-

ula and Napoleon — but, when I arrived at Santa Claus, I was surprised to discover that he didn't have one single, widely accepted origin story. It was a mix of religion, tradition and lore, and each country had a different idea about him. So I felt that we had this great opportunity to try and fill in that missing chapter for him. And, if we could do it with a good dose of humor and heart, we might be able to create a true Christmas classic."

The result is a charming movie about the unlikely friendship between Jesper, the spoiled son of a rich postal academy head (voiced by Jason Schwartzman) who learns a lesson in human kindness and altruism after meeting a mysterious toymaker (voiced by J.K. Simmons) in the odd, faraway arctic of Smeerensburg. Along the way, Jesper teaches the feuding families of the town to reconcile, finds a romantic partner in the town's frustrated schoolteacher (voiced by Rashida Jones) and forgets about his own selfish mo-

tivations. It's a great story to take in around the holidays with the family, but what sets the movie apart is its rich 2D animation, stunning lighting and the memorable character designs by Torsten Schrank and impeccable production design by Szymon Biernacki and Marcin Jakubowski.

Pablos says one of his most important goals was to create a movie that not only looked unique, but also has its own sense of storytelling and tone. "It was very important to me that the film did not feel like it could have come out of any other studio, and that it had its own personality without losing the broad appeal that's expected from a high-end holiday film."

A Timeless Message of Generosity

As the film's acclaimed producer Jinko Gotoh (*The Little Prince*, *The LEGO Movie 2: The Second Part*, *Finding Nemo*) points out, "One of *Klaus*' major themes is the value of selflessness. That's a universal theme that I think



Cold-Weather Friends:
Klaus plays with the idea of an unlikely friendship between a spoiled young man and a reclusive toymaker, voiced by Jason Schwartzman and J.K. Simmons. The film's outstanding character designs are by talented German artist Torsten Schrank (*Smallfoot*, *Maya the Bee*).



anyone in any age group can understand. What's so beautiful about this is that, even though the movie is a Christmas story, it centers on such a powerful, universal theme that everyone can identify with."

Among Pablos' most important decisions regarding *Klaus* was to launch it as a state-of-the-art, traditionally 2D-animated movie, unlike any of the other projects coming out of the major studios these days. "As someone who's always looking for the next great animated film idea, I've come to learn that these ideas have a strong voice when it comes to what they want to be," he explains. "If you learn to listen, you'll find that some ideas clearly lend themselves more to CGI, some to live action and, every now and then, you come across an idea that clearly would benefit from the organic quality that only traditional animation can bring. This was the case with *Klaus*."

Pablos and his team of over 250 employees at SPA Studios were keen on picking up

traditional animation where it had been left off in the 1990s, when Disney, Pixar and DreamWorks invested most of their creativity and innovation in developing a good-looking CG pipeline. "It was always the same pipeline and the same style, and it had stopped trying to evolve for a while," says Pablos. "I always

to advance traditional animation for audiences in 2019 and beyond. After carefully analyzing the 2D pipeline, they came to the conclusion that they could make great progress in the ways they used light and color in the movie. "We decided to create tools to allow artists to effectively add volumetric

"It was very important to me that the film did not feel like it could have come out of any other studio, and that it had its own personality without losing the broad appeal that's expected from a high-end holiday film."

— Director Sergio Pablos



felt like traditional animation should keep evolving, it should keep being pushed forward. So the aesthetic comes from discovering what we can add to the traditional animation pipeline by incorporating today's tools, ingenuity and creativity to make it look different."

The SPA team set off to discover new ways

lighting to drawings," says Pablos. "We looked at many different approaches but, in the end, we decided to go for a hand-crafted approach, which fits beautifully with the rest of the traditional animation process."

Let There Be Light

As SPA's head of light & shadow Florian



A Child's Christmas:

Director Sergio Pablos says one of his favorite characters in the movie is young girl Margu, who plays a big role in awakening Jesper's heart and conscience.

Aupetit explains, "What I love about this movie is that it finally combines two worlds, the world of illustration and the one of animation. Some attempts were made on short films, but it's the first time I have seen this level of quality in an animated feature film. Our first challenge was to actually discover a new way to do the lighting on a traditionally animated movie. But, because the lighting on *Klaus* is a manual process, the goal was to keep consistency through all the sequences. On the surface, the lighting creates a bridge to smoothly blend the characters with the backgrounds, but it is also a powerful tool that supports the story."

Aupetit, who counts *Akira*, *The Incredibles*, *Breaking Bad* and *Apocalypse Now* as some of the film's sources of inspiration in terms of lighting, says nothing available on the market satisfied the needs of the feature, so the



As a result, unlike many other 2D animated movies, the characters and backgrounds look like they belong to the same world.

'Our crew represented the most diverse group of people I have ever worked with. We had the best artists come from all around the globe (from 22 different countries), men and women between the ages of early 20s to 65-plus years old. We had almost gender parity, where women represented over 43 percent of the crew.'

— Producer Jinko Gotoh



studio had to develop its own tool. "It's a software with the philosophy of illustration, but adapted for animation. And the good thing is that the lighting artists don't need to be animators — being just an illustrator is enough."

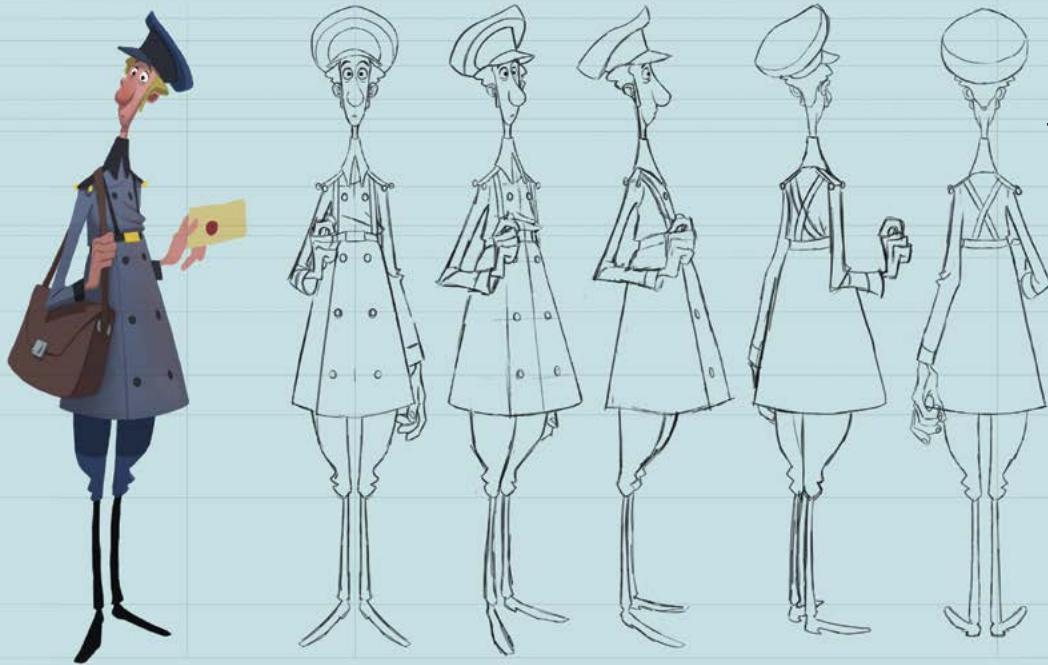
"We're used to seeing 2D characters looking like stickers put on painted backgrounds," says Pablos. "I felt that we needed to feel like the same artists painted the whole world."

The director also mentions that, whenever he stepped into the production departments

of studios in the past, he was always impressed by the stunning artwork created by all the different artists who work on the movie throughout the development process. "You see all this amazing art showcasing different sensibilities and styles," Pablos notes. "But once they are put through the pipeline, the art gets ground down to a standardized style. That always nagged at me, that we weren't able to put any of the eclectic artists' styles directly on the screen."

That's why the artists and technical innovators at SPA created a new system that allowed them to put visual development art into motion on the big screen, while preserving the original styles and details. As he points out, "We found that the best way was to start from traditional animation and try

Jesper
turnaroud
by character
designer
Torsten Schrank.



and add all the right bells and whistles to get the visuals right. As we like to [say], we're not bringing 2D back, we're bringing it forward!"

Madrid Hosts the World

Producer Jinko Gotoh says she has been quite overwhelmed by the positive reaction of audiences at screenings. "I couldn't be prouder of Sergio," she says. "I know it sounds crazy, but I feel like the mother of a genius. It's been quite moving to see audiences being moved by the movie from laughter to tears, just as we had hoped for. Our crew represented the most diverse group of people I have ever worked with. We had the best art-

ists come from all around the globe (from 22 different countries), men and women between the ages of early 20s to 65-plus years old. We had almost gender parity, where women represented over 43 percent of the crew. Many of our team were young and had never worked on a movie. However, the biggest challenge was for production to understand what it takes to support Sergio as the director and his creative process."

Pablos echoes his producer's thoughts. "As you get closer to the ending, you tend to lose perspective, and you have to rely on people watching the film to see if things are working," he explains. "Fortunately, every time we have had a screening so far, the re-

actions have been great: The lights go on and I see a sea of moist eyes, and that's the best compliment. So I am overwhelmed by the response we've been getting."

The director says although he has a deep fondness for traditional 2D animation, he doesn't want *Klaus* to be a statement against CG animation. "What it all boils down to is that it doesn't matter what medium you use as long as the format, the style is the best one for the movie and the story you are telling. You shouldn't chase trends. Instead, you should make decisions based on what serves the movie's ideas best."

When asked about his take on the world of animation today, Pablos is hugely positive. "It has never been better for creators like me," he responds. "I chose to go back to Spain after a long stay in California and then Paris, because I wanted to raise a family and keep the kids close to their grandparents. This could have never happened without Netflix. Our projects at SPA would get picked up, but they would get made elsewhere. Now we see so many more possibilities for creators all around the world. As a consumer/audience, I also get so much more exposure to films and TV series from all over the world. It's a wonderful time for animation. Let's hope it lasts a long time!"

***Klaus* is currently available to stream on Netflix worldwide.**



Espionage Takes Wing

Blue Sky's 13th animated movie *Spies in Disguise* puts a state-of-the-art CG spin on the classic genre and delivers a message about leaving the world a better place.

by Michael Mallory

There's a surprising message in *Spies in Disguise*, the new Blue Sky Studios/20th Century Fox animated feature hitting theaters on Christmas Day from Walt Disney Pictures. It's not simply that an epic, globetrotting, action-filled spy film can legitimately be done in animation. Nor is it that an action-adventure film can also successfully support a gonzo comedy angle. It isn't even that, yes, audiences *will* accept a black Bond. Instead, the film's message has to do with the state of the world we live in today, and how it could be made better.

Pretty heavy for a family film ostensibly about a man turning into a bird.

Spies in Disguise is loosely based on Lucas Marnell's 2009 short *Pigeon: Impossible*, in which a pigeon accidentally takes control of the president's nuclear football. Writers Cindy Davis, Brad Copeland

term, too, according to the filmmakers. "We had a rough blueprint for the dialogue," says Troy Quane, who directed the movie along with Nick Bruno, "but when we'd get into the room with Will and start to improv through the scenes, that would give us a lot of spontaneous actions and lines and jokes. We recorded some of that and brought it back to our animators, so you get not only the vocals but the physicality as well." He adds that the animators also referenced some of Smith's classic films, such as *Independence Day*.

Acting as cocky Lance Sterling's foil in the story is a young, incalculably brilliant, idealistic engineer in the spy agency's gadget lab named Walter Beckett, played by Tom Holland. Walter advocates for using such non-violent spy "weapons" as a device that envelops the enemy in a plastic hug, and a sponta-

Killian, a.k.a. Robo-Hand, from wiping out the entire U.S. espionage operation with deadly drones. Not only that, they must work surreptitiously, since Robo-Hand (so named for his high-tech mechanical claw) has framed Lance as a turncoat.

A New Take on the Buddy Pic

Much of *Spies in Disguise* is a high-voltage buddy film that belies the fact that Smith and Holland recorded their parts separately. "We never managed to get a session with them together," says Bruno. "In the recording sessions we'd use the pages, but then seeing where we ended up we'd go back to the other guy and say, 'Okay, we've got a new version of this.' There was a lot more back-and-forth between them, but they were both really game and really patient."

Australian actor Ben Mendelsohn voices Robo-Hand and in a refreshing twist for any spy film, the villain is actually given understandable motivation for wanting to destroy the other side. In fact, Bruno says that the film's repeated release postponements - it was originally slated for January 2019 and bumped even before Disney's acquisition of Fox - created more time to really fine-tune the character. The spy agency's director Jenkins, a.k.a. Joyless, is played by Reba McEntire (cast very much against type), while Rashida Jones gives voice to Internal Affairs Agent Marcy Kappel, who embarks on a heavily-armed, Javert-like quest to bring in the supposed double agent, and Rachel Brosnahan plays the key role of young Walter's mom.

"We had a rough blueprint for the dialogue, but when we'd get into the room with Will Smith and start to improv through the scenes, that would give us a lot of spontaneous actions and lines and jokes."

— Co-director Troy Quane



and Lloyd Taylor crafted an entirely new adventure centering on the daring, and ultimately bizarre, exploits of too-cool-for-school secret agent Lance Sterling, played by two-time Oscar nominee Will Smith.

Played by, as opposed to *voiced by*, is the accurate

neously-exploding image of a kitten in a snowstorm of glitter, whose "Awww!" factor disarms even the nastiest bad guy. The two are destined to remain apart until a concoction of Walter's accidentally turns the superspy into a pigeon, which forces them to team up in order to prevent the cyborg villain

Spies in Disguise is the first feature directorial gig for both animator Bruno and story artist Quane, who found their creative partnership easy to manage. "We didn't divvy it up in the sense of, 'You handle all these departments, and I'll handle all those departments, and I'll see you at the end of the movie,'" says Quane. "We really see things similarly." Adds Bruno: "As everybody that we work with can tell you, there's really only one brain we share."

They also share a love of spy films, though their aim with this movie was not to spoof the originals, but rather have fun with their conventions. One such example was in designing Lance Sterling to resemble a martini glass with a wide torso over thin, stem-like legs (shaken, not bird). That proved to be a challenge for the animation team, according to supervising animator Jeff Gabor. "When you have legs that thin doing a lot of action they tend to get wiped away either with motion-blur or image strobes," he says. "You have to be extra careful with your space and timing of animation to make sure those things read."

Spies in Disguise offered myriad challenges for just about every department, starting with designing human Lance and pigeon Lance so that they were both recognizably Lance. "We spent a year trying to make sure the models were in reference to each other, particularly the eyes," Gabor says. "At Blue Sky we're pretty familiar with animating birds [through the *Rio* films] but we wanted to make sure than Lance felt more like a man in a bird suit, so you can actually feel Will Smith coming through the bird."

Another tall order for the team was animating the sumo-sized henchman Kamora (voiced by Masi Oka) after he falls victim to a weapon of Walter's that temporarily eradicates the skeleton, leaving a mass of living Jell-O. "That took a lot of coordination between the sim, effects, animation and design departments," Gabor states. "You can't just make him squishy and squashy since he has tattoos all over him. Everything has to move and relate to everything else and if you just push on one little area, you won't get the feeling that it's all one piece."

Pigeon's Point of View

A challenge of a different sort was creating bird Lance's pigeon POV, depicting 360-degree vision in a visual environment that would give Salvador Dalí vertigo. "It was definitely tricky," says production designer Michael Knapp. "We started looking at 360-degree video camera footage, but ultimately we could only do so much in Maya. We ended up doing a render within CGI Studio [Blue Sky's rendering package]. We animated to camera and then the render group would show us what it looked like unwrapped and rendered in all 360 degrees outside of that camera. Since we were working in 2:35 aspect ratio, it had to unwrap in a way that fit the screen top to bottom, as well as side to side, and connect as



Lance's point of view shifts."

Says Bruno, "We did some tests and finally found the look we were happy with, but then we put some characters into it and saw them explode all over the place. It was really a back-and-forth process with some friendly, patient, and forgiving animators."

It also fell to Knapp to create the many exotic and evocative locales seen in the film, including such highly recognizable ones as the National Mall in D.C. and Venice's Piazza San Marco. "The goal was always to try and capture the feeling for the place," he says. "We would take liberties with what we needed to tell the story and so the action would unfold properly."

A bigger challenge, though, was the completely fabricated setting of Robo-Hand's lair, a ruined edifice on a remote Scottish island, because it had to accommodate so many different action scenes. "You're constantly redressing the set for different

actors without having to rig and materialize every single variation," Gabor notes. "That's definitely something we're looking to expand further."

Still, the heart of *Spies in Disguise* remains its message. Walter is convinced there is a better way to spy, and even live, than Lance's violent fight-fire-with-fire approach. That is the main point of conflict between them, even overshadowing their obvious hipster-versus-dork polarization. Quane states that their philosophical confrontation scene was the toughest of the film. "Lance and Walter are on a boat and all they had to do was talk about their differences," he says, "but every word means something and every line counts. It took forever to find the efficiency of that scene in a way that didn't bore us to tears, but at the same time got their messages across on where they stand in their philosophies."

The moral, the directors say, is that you can conquer every technical challenge of digital animation

'At Blue Sky we're pretty familiar with animating birds [through the Rio films], but we wanted to make sure than Lance felt more like a man in a bird suit, so you can actually feel Will Smith coming through the bird.'

— Supervising animator Jeff Gabor

action," says Knapp. "You've got hundreds of drones, you've got soldiers and our main characters duking it out, and you've got glitter involved." To enable the film's many crowd scenes, an innovative enhanced crowd animation package was developed. "For this film we started a background generator system so we could make many, many more variations of char-

acters that can be thrown at you, but it still all comes down to the characters, their authenticity, and their emotions.

And glitter, if you've got it. ♦

Disney releases Blue Sky's *Spies in Disguise* in theaters on Christmas.

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM

Produced By

BRADFORD LEWIS p.g.a. | **BONNIE ARNOLD** p.g.a.

Written And Directed By **DEAN DEBLOIS**

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Written By **DEAN DEBLOIS**

Based Upon The "How to Train Your Dragon"

Book Series By **CRESSIDA COWELL**

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

Production Designer **PIERRE-OLIVIER VINCENT "POV"**

BEST FILM EDITING

JOHN K. CARR ACE

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

JOHN POWELL

"DEAN DEBLOIS BRINGS HIS WONDROUS DRAGON TRILOGY TO A SPECTACULAR FINISH."

THE COURTSHIP BETWEEN TOOTHLESS AND LIGHT FURY IS A THING OF BALLETIC BEAUTY THAT BRINGS OUT THE DAZZLING ARTISTRY OF THE ANIMATION."

Rolling Stone

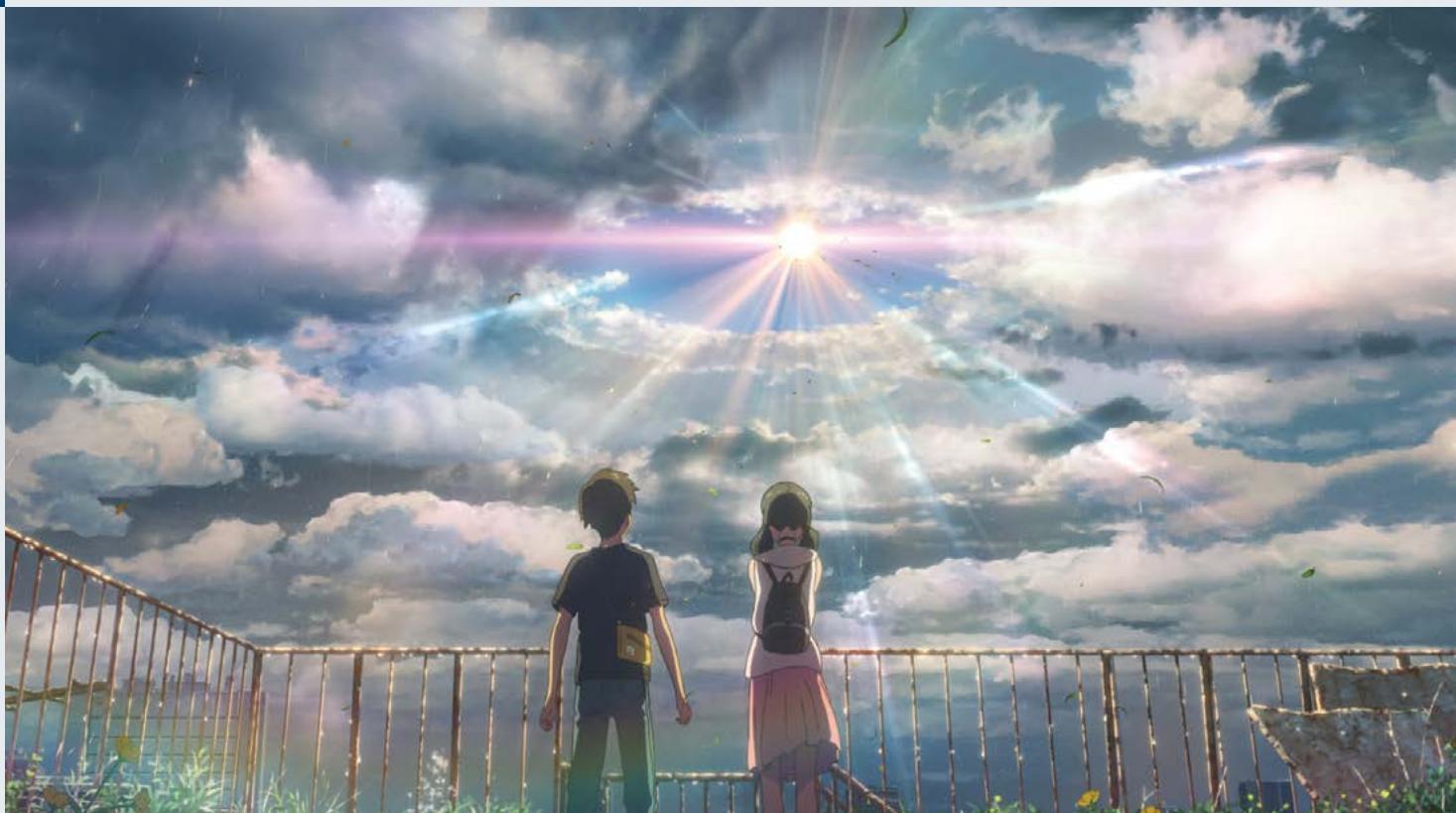
"COMPOSER JOHN POWELL'S FINEST MOMENT IN THE SERIES, WITH AN ORCHESTRAL SCORE THAT SIMPLY SOARS."

Deadline



DREAMWORKS

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR
DRAGON
THE HIDDEN WORLD



A Torrent of Talent

Japanese auteur Makoto Shinkai discusses his career and the acclaimed new feature *Weathering with You*, which arrives in U.S. theaters next month via GKIDS.

By Charles Solomon

Weathering with You, which debuted earlier this year in Japan, is Makoto Shinkai's first feature since he dazzled audiences on both sides of the Pacific with *Your Name.* in 2016. An intriguing, complex film, *Your Name.* combined elements of a body-switching teen romcom with a profound meditation on the trauma the Japanese people are still suffering from what they call the Great East Japan Catastrophe and Westerners refer to as Fukushima.

Shinkai had already won a devoted international following for his earlier features, *The Place Promised in Our Early Days* (2004), *5 Centimeters Per Second* (2007) and *The Garden of Words* (2013). But none of them approached the runaway success of *Your Name.*, which became the number one box office hit in Japan that year (\$361 million) and the sixth-highest grossing film of all time there. It was the first animated film *not* directed by Hayao Miyazaki to gross more than ¥10 billion (\$92 million).

Weathering with You was produced by Genki Kawamura (*Mirai*, *Parasyte*, *The Boy and the*

Beast) at Tokyo-based CoMix Wave Films with the 2D animation created with Toon Boom tools. The movie is another critical and financial success, earning over ¥12.72 billion (\$117 million), making it the 18th highest grossing film in Japanese history and the top grosser of 2019. It received a 100% score on Rotten Tomatoes, and was chosen as the Japanese sub-

ishima comes to a rain-sodden Tokyo: he has run away from his island hometown, hoping to find more interesting life. Unlike the sensible, artistic Taki in *Your Name.*, Hodaka is impetuous and impractical: He has very little money and doesn't carry the student ID card that would enable him to get a part-time job. While living on the streets of Shinjuku, Hodaka

"When I was making *Weathering with You*, I thought about how to make the film more enjoyable to a larger audience, because the audience for *Your Name.* was so much bigger than for any of my previous films. I wanted to make something that would really deserve the attention of so many people."

— Writer-director Makoto Shinkai



mission for the International Feature Oscar — the country's first animated candidate since *Princess Mononoke* in 1998. It also won the top prize at Hollywood's Animation Is Film festival in October.

As the film opens, teenager Hodaka Mor-

meets Hina Amano, an appealing girl who treats him with kindness. He discovers she's an orphan, struggling to care for herself and her younger brother, Nagisa.

But Hina also possesses a power out of legend: She can call to the sun to part the clouds



Come Rain or Shine: The new Makoto Shinkai movie centers on a high school boy runs away to Tokyo and befriends an orphan girl who seems to be able to manipulate the weather.

and shine on people --for a brief time. Hodaka hatches a scheme to exploit her talent, which brings them happiness and more money than they've ever seen in the hardscrabble world of the post-Bubble Japanese economy.

A Boy, a Girl and a Water Disaster

"I don't really think of this as a boy-meets-girl story," Shinkai commented during a recent interview at Animation Is Film. "A boy does meet a girl, but I didn't write it as a love story. It's more about an adolescent boy finding someone who is really important to him, then what he goes through with her."

Shinkai explained that the inspiration for the film came from the meteorological and geological threats the Japanese people face: "Every summer, there's a water disaster of some sort. But in recent years, there have been more disasters, more earthquakes, more water disasters — and in October, Typhoon Hagibis



struck. Living in Japan, I've seen a lot of disasters, so the film probably reflects that fact."

In Hodaka's Tokyo, it rains constantly, flooding sections of the low-lying city. Commentators have interpreted the unceasing rains as a metaphor for climate change. Like other

young people around the world, Hodaka and Hina feel trapped in the rapidly warming, increasingly inhospitable planet previous generations have left them.

"In *Garden of Words*, I used rain as a visual challenge," Shinkai said. "Having done that, in *Weathering with You*, I wanted to use the rain more emotionally. It's always raining, just as there's always this peer pressure members of the young generation experience: People have to be a certain way. All these emotions keep accumulating, just like the rain accumulates. I wanted to express that with the rain."

"Also, Tokyo is a city full of black asphalt, and when it rains, it gets *really* black," he added. "I imagined an image of a girl wearing a white sweatshirt standing on the black asphalt and the light just spreading around her."

Knowledgeable viewers have noted that if anyone needed to reconstruct early 21st century Tokyo, they could use *Weathering with You*



said emphatically. "This is the city that we live in, this is the city we see on the screen. So there's a McDonald's in Shinjuku — just as there is in real life — and we use real corporate logos in the film, unlike most animated features."

The director felt it was so important to have Hodaka and Hina meet in a real McDonald's, rather than one of the obvious spoofs in other anime, he met with McDonald's executives in Japan and eventually persuaded them to grant permission to use the famous Golden Arches.

Musical Storytelling

The rock band Radwimps wrote and performed the music for *Your Name.*, drawing praise from critics and fans. Shinkai wanted to work with them again for his new film.

"For *Your Name.*, Radwimps did a wonderful composition, but in *Weathering with You*, they actually changed the story," he recalled. "I wrote the script, but when I sent it to Radwimps, lead vocalist/songwriter Yojiro Noda wrote the lyrics to accompany the film. His lyrics made me better understand the characters of Hodaka and Hina better, so I changed certain scenes and some of the dialogue. Radwimps aren't just composers now: They really got involved in the storytelling."

As *Your Name.* broke so many records, following up its success could be daunting. But Shinkai approached his new film with his accustomed modesty: "*Your Name.* was a hit, but *Weathering with You* was only my first film after it. When I was making *Weathering*, I thought about how to make the film more enjoyable to a larger audience, because the audience for *Your Name.* was so much bigger than for any of my previous films. I wanted to make something that would really deserve the attention of so many people." ♦

GKIDS will release *Weathering with You* in theaters on January 17, 2020.



Creating China's Charming Demon Boy

How *Ne Zha*, an unusual Chinese animated movie about a mischievous demon boy became one of the surprise hits of the year.

In a year full of the usual animated sequels – talking toys, adventurous princesses and friendly dragons – China’s *Ne Zha* has emerged one of the most unusual animated offerings. The beautifully crafted feature tells the intriguing story of a gifted young deity (*Ne Zha*) who is born from a heavenly pearl by the Lord of Heaven. However, since an ancient prophecy has predicted that he will bring about the destruction of the world, he is shunned as an outcast and has to make some major decisions to restore order among humans.

The film, which was released in China last summer, has earned over \$728.99 million worldwide and became

the country’s most popular animated movie of all time (*Kung Fu Panda 3* holds the No. 2 spot!). In an exclusive email interview with *Animag*, the film’s director Yu Yang shares some of his thoughts and experiences on the making of this phenomenal movie.

“I was studying pharmacy (in Sichuan Uni-



‘When we were finally able to transform our vision to the big screen, our animation industry also gained a lot of valuable experience from this project.’

— Writer-director Yu Yang



A Successful Career Change

Yang says he had to fend off people’s misunderstanding of his career change and he also had to con-

tinue surviving in this business. “It was a rough period,” he recalls. “But when Coloroom Pictures approached me with the proposal of investing in my animated feature, I quickly came up with the idea of a project that defies stereotypes and focuses on the twist of fate. I wanted to rely on the efforts of our domestic



animators, to produce a top-notch animated movie and change people's misconception towards Chinese animation."

Yang and his team began working on the project in 2015 and delivered the movie in the summer of 2019. Development and pre-production took nearly two years, from script to conceptual design, and the actual production took nearly three years. The CG team relied on Autodesk Maya, Adobe and Nuke to produce the film's well-crafted animation. In addition to Chengdu Coco Cartoon, Yang also invited over 70 animation studios to help out with the production of this film (bringing the overall number of the overall team to 1,600 plus).

When asked about his favorite part of the movie, Yang says he loved the part where Ne Zha grew four arms, holding up the iceberg and melting it by releasing flames from his body!

"This scene represented Ne Zha's resistance against fate," he explains. "The iceberg symbolized the powerful force of fate as it was constantly pressing over everyone's head. Ne Zha acquired his power from the love of his parents, that gave him the courage to confront fate. When the flame from his body finally melted the iceberg, he not only saved the lives of all the civilians, but he also eliminated people's discrimination

against him. It turned his fate from being the Devil to becoming God."

Experience Counts

Looking back at the ups and downs of producing this labor of love, the director says the biggest challenge was working in a "still incomplete system" within his country's animation industry and finding ways to perfect his movie. "We lack screenwriting experience –

and developing our own production logistics, which is much harder to do compared to countries that have already developed their movie industry. When we were finally able to transform our vision to the big screen, our animation industry also gained a lot of valuable experience from this project."

Yang says he feels very gratified to know that audiences have embraced the movie both in China and around the world. "My initial re-

'There's a Ne Zha in everyone's heart. That's to help us break through barriers, defy stereotypes and make our dreams come true!'

— Writer-director Yu Yang

Epic Trailblazer: Directed by Yu Yang, *Ne Zha* had a U.S. theatrical release last summer. The movie was selected as the Chinese entry for Best Int'l Feature Film at this year's Academy Awards.



this was my first time writing a movie script," he explains. "We also lack directing experience (this was my first time directing a feature film), production managing experience, expert-level animators, and advanced technical support. Our entire production process is constantly going through trial and error; we are cultivating our domestic animation industry

reaction was feeling very grateful because the efforts of so many animators are finally being recognized by the audience," he says. "Then there was some unease, because I felt that this film still has a lot of flaws. I'm humbled by the praise from the audience, and I feel that I'm not confident enough to receive such high praise. Then, finally, comes the peace of mind, because I have to get past all of this in order to genuinely devote myself to creating my next project!"

Finally, he says that Ne Zha continues to be his biggest animation hero. "There's a Ne Zha in everyone's heart," he notes. "That's to help us break through barriers, defy stereotypes and make our dreams come true!" ♦

Well Go USA distributed *Ne Zha* in select theaters in U.S. and Canada this fall.

Laughing with Daffy and Porky Again

Peter Browngardt pays homage to classic '40s-era Looney Tunes with *The Curse of the Monkey Bird*.

When animation writer and director Peter Browngardt was in junior high, his brother took him to see a screening of classic Chuck Jones *Looney Tunes* shorts at the Museum of Moving Image. Jones also appeared in person to promote his book *Chuck Amuck*. "That experience changed my life forever," he recalls. "It was the first time I was seeing so many watch these shorts together and laugh at all these great shorts. It was such an amazing communal experience."

Years later, Browngardt — who is best known for creating acclaimed Cartoon Network series *Uncle Grandpa* (2010-2017) and *Secret Mountain Fort Awesome* (2011-2012) and working on shows such as *Chowder*, *Adventure Time* and *Steven Universe* — is now overseeing Warner Bros' upcoming *Looney Tunes Cartoons* series, which will stream on the new service HBO Max in 2020. One of the series' shorts, *The Curse of the Monkey Bird*, is one of the year's big Oscar and Annie Award contenders in the Best Animated Short race.

The beautifully designed and animated short finds Porky Pig (Bob Bergen) and Daffy Duck (Eric Bauza) venturing into the lair of a mysterious "Monkey Bird" to get their hands on some hidden treasure. Classic animation fans are already raving about the short's on-target homage to '40s-era *Looney Tunes* shorts.

The Curse of the Monkey Bird is directed by Peter Browngardt; exec produced by Browngardt and Sam Register. Supervising producer: Alex Kirwan. Story: Browngardt, Johnny Ryan, Eddie Tigueiros. Music: Joshua Moshier. Art director: Aaron Spurgeon. Character designers: Kali Fontecchio, Carey Yost. Animation director: Joey Capps. Story editor: Johnny Ryan. ♦

"*Monkey Bird* was the first short we produced, and we spent more time on the animation, the design, the music — we had the full orchestra — specifically to be able to screen it theatrically," says

50 work on the cartoons at the Warner Bros. Animation studio in Burbank, but they are also aided by four international studios (Tonic DNA in Montreal, Yowza! in Toronto, Yearim in Korea and Snip-

ple in the Philippines. "It was a really global effort to create these classic cartoons," says Browngardt. "We had people from all parts of the world working with these characters that are so timeless and well known. They all used a variety of methods — from old-fashioned pencil and paper, all the way to Toon Boom Harmony and Adobe software — to produce the animation."

The artists studied all of the classic designs of the characters as inspiration for each one of the shorts. "Every director had their own take on Bugs, Daffy and Porky," says Browngardt. "We did a lot of drawing and

decided to cherry pick from all the characters in time to land on our versions of the characters. We wanted the fluidity and energy. Our characters are more rounded, more squat. We gave Bugs yellow gloves, and Daffy has the longer, thinner bill. Porky is Clampett's version, with the bigger eyes and head. We definitely did a lot of homework!"

Browngardt says he and his team have been thrilled by the positive response of fans at screenings. "As much as I want to take credit, it all comes down not screwing up these beloved, universal characters. I like to say that we are standing on the shoulders of giants, hoping that we don't lose our balance and fall flat on our faces. The people who made the original shorts invented this art form. They took the baton and ran with it. They learned on the job and had decades to perfect it. They are the Michelangelos of this art form. I just hope that our shorts will make people laugh. If I can get audiences to have that same communal experience that I had when I saw the *Looney Tunes* in the theater for the first time, that would be amazing." ♦



'I like to say that we are standing on the shoulders of giants, hoping that we don't lose our balance and fall flat on our faces. The people who made the original shorts invented this art form.'

— Director Peter Browngardt



Browngardt, who names classics such as *Falling Hare*, *Hare Ribbin'*, *Buccaneer Bunny* and *Hair-Raising Hare* as some of his favorites. "I am a huge fan of those early Chuck Jones, Bob Clampett and Friz Freleng shorts."

A Valentine to the Past

Browngardt and his team began to develop the idea to reboot the Looney Tunes characters with a deep reverence for their origins in the fall of 2017, and the series began production in 2018. The shorts, which were first introduced at Annecy in June, go back to the roots of the characters. "The characters' personalities were wacky, zany and high-energy," notes the director. "We wanted the shorts to be more surreal and cartoony. Our challenge was how to recreate the old style of animation and characters while bringing that energy and aesthetic to 2019 and 2020. That language and feel of cartoony animation is not so much around anymore. But that's how I fell in love with the medium. I used to watch those shorts on TNT and on my older brother's videotapes."

The Emmy-nominated director and his team of

Tackling Tough Material Delicately

Two of the year's acclaimed animated shorts approach complex subjects with subtlety and an artistic touch.

It's no secret that the booming animated short format has allowed numerous artists to explore exciting, bold and risky subject matter in a variety of styles. Two of the year's most thought-provoking shorts — Lisa LaBracio and Anna Samo's *The Opposites Game* and Floor Adams' *Mind My Mind* — take different approaches in tackling two timely and relevant topics in our lives today. The first examines the way we look at gun violence, while the latter offers an interesting way of illustrating the many daily challenges faced by someone with autism.

The Opposites Game is part of the TED-Ed series "There's a Poem for That," a youth and education initiative which features animated interpretations of poems that give language to some of life's biggest feelings. With the help of poet and TED speaker, Sarah Kay, TED-Ed curated a series comprised of eight poems from contemporary spoken-word poets, and four poems by poets of the past. As a TED-Ed animation director, Lisa LaBracio took a peek at all the available poems and was specifically drawn to Brendan Constantine's poem.

"This was my first time 'meeting' Brendan's work," says LaBracio. "When I first read *The Opposites Game*, Brendan's exchange with his students made me laugh. I am also a teacher. I've taught art and animation to young people in New York City classrooms, homeless shelters and community spaces for more than a decade. Brendan's poem reminded me of lessons I've done with my own students, how their ideas shape the entire lesson, and how often times they teach me something unexpected by the end of a class!"

Unanswered Questions

LaBracio says Constantine's words also hit her in the pit of her stomach. "Gun violence touches the lives of most of my students, in and out of the classroom," she explains. "I love that Brendan's poem asks questions, not just of the students in his classroom, but also of the audience. And I love that he never answers those questions for us, or seeks to tell us how to feel."

Samo, who grew up in Russia and lived in Germany for a long time, recalls being surprised when she saw "no guns" signs all around

'The short format gives me more chances to experiment: You can't improvise that much while making an animated feature, but in a short format it is easier — and if you fail, well at least it's only one year of your life and not five!'

— Director Anna Samo

her neighborhood when she first moved to Chicago. "At first, I thought it was a joke, but soon enough the reality of the city and this land started to dawn on me," she recalls. "The way I grew up, for me there is only one answer: There should be no guns in a civil world. And though after six years spent in this country I am able to better understand the complexity of this issue, my reaction is still the same."

LaBracio and Samo began working on the short in the summer of 2018, and the two spent some time throwing ideas around before Samo did her first tests in August. The production wrapped at the end of last year and was first published in January of 2019. The directors knew that they wanted the animation to be tactile, to balance the innocence vs. profundity in the poem and to use the materials from the classroom. "We began by looking at chalkboard animations, and also William Kentridge's animations and illustra-

tions on book pages, and we were also looking at some blackout poetry," says LaBracio.

The Opposites Game was animated directly under the camera and shot using Dragonframe. It was drawn frame-by-frame with charcoal pencils inside of a book — or to be precise, inside of nine books. "We began by painting out Emily Dickinson's poems, whiting them out," says LaBracio. "Then, working with charcoal pencils and dry pastel for splashes of color, we drew each frame, turned the page, and began a new drawing on the next one. We looked for ways to



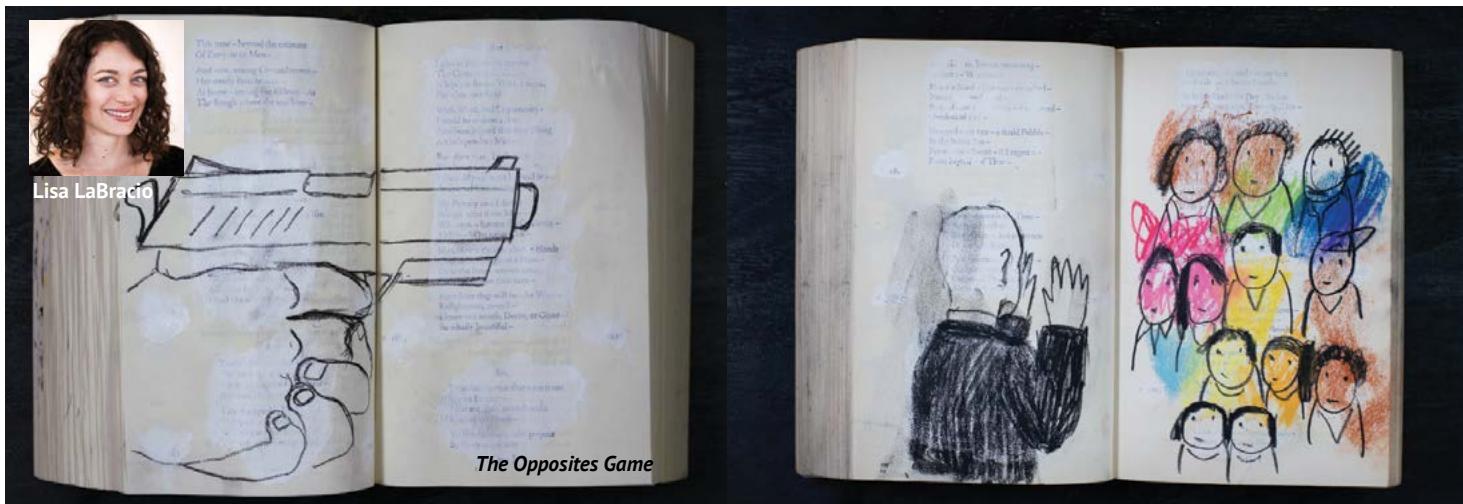
integrate some stop-motion elements — we folded the pages, crumpled them up, and cut into the book to bring more visual diversity into the film. We collected the remnants (the torn pages,

the pencil shavings, the charcoal dust) and we cast these into our scenes along the way."

All the animation was produced and created in Samo's Brooklyn home studio and LaBracio's lower Manhattan studio at TED's headquarters. The duo were the only animation artists to work on the visuals and concepts for the show, but they were also assisted by TED-Ed's editorial and production teams who produced the entire series, as well as Weston Fonger of Yessian for sound design and, of course, the poet Brendan Constantine, who supported them on the entire journey.

The artists are quick to mention that one of the wonderful things about working with TED-Ed is that animators are given complete creative freedom with developing the concept and style of their shorts. "We also had a lot of freedom in how we presented our progress along the way. Instead of storyboarding, we started off with some simple animation tests that were





done very quickly, but already contained ideas we would use in the film."

They also point out that it's been quite an experience to follow how audiences react to the short online. "You know, after months of looking at a film frame-by-frame, you forget that it's funny and surprising and moving, and hearing all of those reactions in an audience has been so rewarding," says LaBracio. "Since TED-Ed's core online audience is made up of teachers and students, we're also delighted to hear feedback from our educator community that the film is being used in the classroom to start challenging conversations, and we have also received a lot of requests to screen the film at various gun violence awareness events."

Inside a Special Mind

Floor Adams' *Mind My Mind* is another example of an animator using a deceptively simple animation style to tackle a complex issue. Adams, who teaches animation to young people with autism, wanted to depict the daily difficulties of social interactions for autistic individuals. She remembers how one of her students knew everything about the Tokyo metro system, so she asked him how he stored all the information, and why? "He said he just finds it interesting and therefore then remembers it, even though he is not able to organize his day

or do his homework," Adams notes. "That made me think: What does that look like from the inside? How does such a brain work?"

Around the same time, Adams had a short-lived relationship with someone with autism. "Until that diagnosis came, I never suspected it," she recalls. "That was a strange sensation: working with people with autism but not recognizing it outside that context. That there is such a hidden world in someone. For many, autism is very

elusive and cryptic. And in many cases also invisible, or masked. But the daily struggle is great and therefore important to be aware of. Animation is a wonderful medium to visualize this."

Adams first thought about the idea for her short about 10 years ago. She prepared by doing many months of research, during which she sent former students questionnaires, read many books and scientific articles, and had conversations with autism experts. She received her first grant in 2013 and worked on the project on her own for about a year and a half. But because of the short's length, she needed more financial support, and that's when producer Willem Thijssen (*Father and Daughter*) from CinéTé came on board. Eventually, the short grew to almost 30 minutes and it became a Dutch-Belgian co-production when producer Tom Van Gestel (Fabrique Fantastique) joined the team.

The short, which was made with a budget of around 290,000 euros (\$310,000) took about six years to complete. "We were able to produce it thanks to the help of many volunteers in the paint department and friendly professionals who assisted for a minimal fee," says

'The film generates many reactions from autistic people who feel represented by the film, and see the film as an opportunity to finally be able to show their loved ones what the world looks like for them.'

— Director Floor Adams

Adams. "A total of 59 people were involved in the production – not full time, though; some of them for a couple of years, others for a small part of the production."

For the filmmaker, creating the look for the film was one of the biggest challenges, because it required building a complete, new logic. "I first mapped out in words and on notes what the most important characteristics of autism are, how this process works internally and what

the obstacles are," she notes. "This went hand in hand with writing the screenplay, because the dramaturgy also had to feel right."

Adams is very pleased that the short has generated positive reactions from autistic people, who feel represented by the film and see it as an opportunity to finally be able to show their loved ones what the world looks like for them. "Conversely, almost everyone knows an autistic person, and the film offers insight into their internal world," she adds. "But even though it is inspired by the experiences of autistic people, it has become a very universal story about social discomfort, daily struggle and being or feeling different. It appears to be very recognizable for many people, and I notice that it makes conversations about these fears and difficulties easier and connects people to each other."

Just like LaBracio and Samo, Adams is a firm believer of the myriad possibilities of the format. "Short films give room for alternative storytelling, more possibilities for experimentation and technology, and visual non-narrative feasts," she says. "It can be narrative, abstract, poetic, fragmentary, trippy, a snapshot or a summary ... there are thousands of possibilities. In the case of short animation, I think visual art and film can really meet, more than in a feature. By playing with style, image, rhythm, music, you can push the boundaries a bit more."

The short film is a genre in itself and, in my view, not a stepping stone to a feature, but a completely different form of filmmaking." ♦

For more info, visit vimeo.com/lisalabra
vimeo.com/tigerunterwegs
ed.ted.com/lessons/the-opposites-game-by-brendan-constantine
mindmymind.nl
flooradams.nl/en

The Talk of Toon Town

The 2019 Edition of the World Animation and VFX Summit was a big smash!

Last month, *Animation Magazine* hosted another successful edition of the **World Animation & VFX Summit** at The Garland in North Hollywood. The three-day event kicked off with a festive awards gala, honoring **2019 Hall of Fame Game Changer** award winners:

Jill Culton, writer and director of DreamWorks/Pearl's *Abominable*.
Award presented by producer Suzanne Burgy (*Abominable*)

Sergio Pablos, writer and director of SPA and Netflix feature *Klaus*.
Award presented by Melissa Cobb, VP of Original Animation, Netflix

Adina Pitt, Cartoon Network's VP of acquisitions and co-productions.
Award presented by Rob Sorcher, global chief content officer, Cartoon Network

SpongeBob SquarePants, Nickelodeon's blockbuster animated hit.

Award presented to Bill Fagerbakke (voice of Patrick) by Kelley Gardner, VP/exec in charge of current series, Nickelodeon

Marlon West, head of effects animation, *Frozen II*.
Award presented by veteran director, producer and animator Bruce W. Smith (*The Proud Family*)

Mike Young, veteran animation producer/Splash Entertainment and Kabillion co-founder/partner.
Award presented by Sarah Finn; exec director, production, Disney TV Animation

Sponsored by Nickelodeon, the evening was hosted by talented voice actress Stephanie Lemelin (*Harvey Girls Forever*).

This year's Summit featured a lively selection of inspiring and informative panels focusing on various aspects of the animation and VFX business. Among this year's inspiring panelists were Ken Anderson, Raquel Benítez Rojas, Matthew Berkowitz, Matt Bishop, Daniel Bort, Ettore Botta, Jamaal Bradley, Lenny Brown, Brendan Burch, Chris Butler, Corey Campodonico, Ben Cawood, Eryk Casemiro, Matthew A. Cherry, Jérémie Clapin, Jon Clark, Rosemary Colliver, Larry Cutler, Mo Davoudian, Dean DeBlois, John Derevlany, Andy Erekson, Federico Fieconni, Josh Fish-

er, Mike Ford, Sherry Gunther-Shugerman, Chris Hamilton, Dirk Hampel, Anttu Harlin, Bob Higgins, James Jacobs, Ben Kalina, Christopher Keenan, Kari Kim, Tatiana Kober, Barry Kotler, Cort Lane, Max Lang, Grant Moran, Sergio Pablos, Damián Perea Lezcano, Michael Polis, Frédéric Puech, Jake L. Rowell, Frank Saperstein, Ethan Shaftel, Derek Spears, Piotr Szczepanowicz, Jermaine Turner, Annette van Duren, Rene Veilleux, Chris Waters, Daniel Weidenfeld, Vernon Wilbert, Jennifer Wolfe, Femke Wolting, Bruce Wright, Andy Yeatman and Aiken Zou.



Top row from left: 2019 honorees **Marc Ceccarelli** (*SpongeBob SquarePants* producer), **Sergio Pablos**, **Adina Pitt**, **Marlon West** and **Mike Young** pose with their Game-Changer awards.



Rob Sorcher and the Cartoon Network team worship at the altar of honoree **Adina Pitt**.



The event's festive opening night party brought hundreds of animation industry professionals to the grounds of The Garland hotel in N. Hollywood. Director Piotr Kabat (*Minor Accident of War*), producers Grzegorz Waclawek and Piotr Szczepanowicz (*Acid Rain*), director Max Lang (*Zog*), director Jamaal Bradley (*Substance*) and director Matthew A. Cherry (*Hair Love*) take a bow after the screening of their shorts.



Left, Melissa Cobb, VP of Kids and Family at Netflix and producer Suzanne Burgy (*Abominable*) were among the guests at the opening night party. Sony Pictures Animation president Kristine Belson (pictured with *Animag* Editor-in-Chief Ramin Zahed) offered an informative and inspiring overview of her studio's projects.

Head of effects animation Marlon West (*Frozen II*) accepted the award from long-time friend animation veteran Bruce W. Smith (*The Proud Family*).

One of the most popular panels focused on animation production for the small screen, which featured, from left, Cort Lane, Daniel Weidenfeld, Jermaine Turner, Andy Yeatman, Ben Cawood and Kari Kim, moderated by Michael Polis.



This year's Oscar contenders panel featured, from left, directors Dean DeBlois (*How to Train Your Dragon* trilogy), Sergio Pablos (*Klaus*) and Chris Butler (*Missing Link*).

The first day of the panels began on a high note with an insightful and interesting conversation with Sony Pictures Animation President Kristine Belson, who offered the audience an informative snapshot of the studio's upcoming projects. The summit also featured panels on the making of some of the year's top animated features such as DreamWorks' *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*, Laika's *Missing Link*, Netflix/SPA's *Klaus* and Disney's *Frozen II*. Other panels showcased the work of some of L.A.'s top indie animation studios, including Six Point Harness, Stoopid Buddy Stoodios, ShadowMachine, Titmouse and Oddbot. The attendees were also offered an in-depth look at the future of small-screen content with top development execs from Marvel Animation, Disney, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network and Fox Animation. The world of VFX, new innovations in VR, Canadian and European co-productions were some of the other topics covered throughout the two days.

"This is our seventh year of bringing together some of the amazing people who work behind the scenes of our beloved industry," said event founder and *Animation Magazine* publisher Jean Thoren. "It's been such a rewarding experience to see our talented friends from all over the

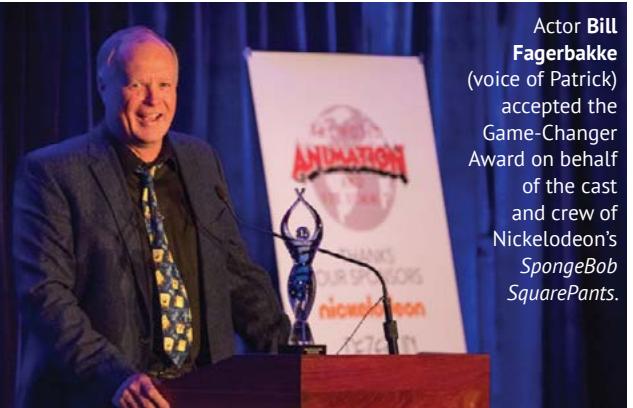
world come together at the Summit to share their experiences and lay the groundwork for more quality productions in the future."

We couldn't have presented this event without the amazing support of our volunteers, panelists, attendees from all over the world and generous sponsors: Nickelodeon, DeZerlin Entertainment, DreamWorks Animation, Splash Entertainment, Illumination Entertainment, *Minor Accident of War*, Netflix, CelAction, Sony Pictures Animation, Animoon, Mattel Television, The Gotham Group, Studio Aragon, Animation Scotland, Screen Scotland, Red Kite Animation, Creative Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Natural Talent Inc., Verité Entertainment, The Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and Magic Light.

Also, let's hear it for our tireless event director Kim Dereviany who worked around the clock for many months to make sure everything went without a hitch. Let's do it again next year! ♦

If you missed the fun this year, we hope you join us in 2020. For more info, visit www.animationmagazine.net/summit.

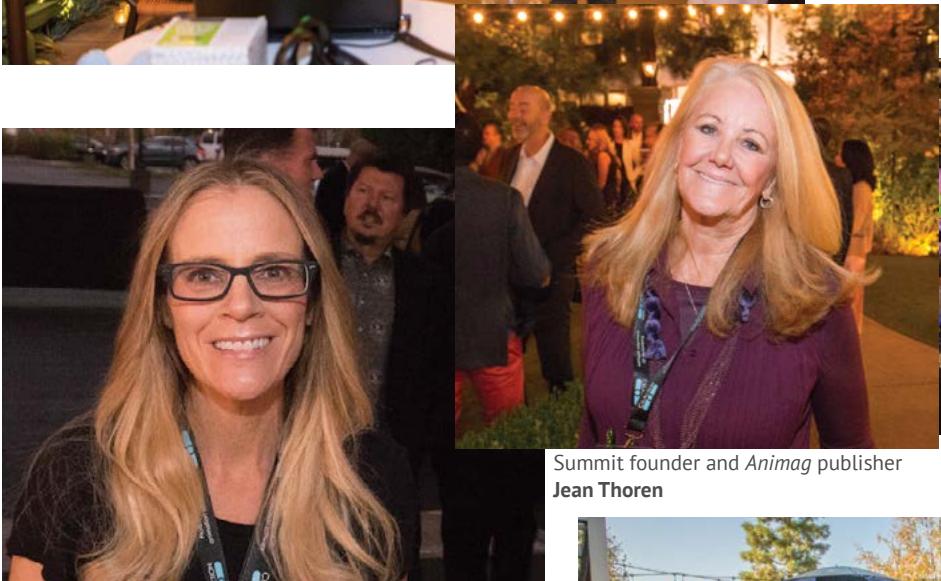
The European animation co-pro panel featured, from left, **Federico Fieconni**, **Damian Perea Lezcano**, **Femke Wolting**, **Ken Anderson** and moderator **John Derevlany**.



Guests had a chance to learn about the latest VR developments at the Summit this year.



Summit attendees, from left, **Greg Little**, **Marie-Claude Beauchamp** and **Ken Katsumoto** take in the sights and sounds of a perfect November evening in Los Angeles.



Summit founder and *Animag* publisher
Jean Thoren

Summit director **Kim Derevlany**



Attendees networked during meals at the relaxing environment of The Garland.



This year, the Summit was proud to host a group of talented animation professionals from Scotland.

All photos by Will Thoren and Tanita Ross Caddy



Femme Fatale: Created by Paul Dini and Bruce Timm, Harley Quinn first appeared in *Batman: The Animated Series* in September 1992. The character finds a new life in animation this year in Warner Bros. Animation's series

Nobody's Fool

DC Comics' hugely popular villainess Harley Quinn steps into the spotlight with her own adult Warner Bros. Animation series.

By K.J. Yossman

Over the last two decades, DC Comics' super-villainess Harley Quinn has blown up the box office, kicked ass in comic books and made an indelible mark on pop culture (she was #15 in most-searched-for costumes for Halloween this year according to Google, above "vampire" and, more poignantly, "Joker"). Now DC's resident psychologist-turned-psycho is returning to the place where it all began: television. Or, more accurately, web TV, with a new eponymous series on DC Universe in which Harley's as likely to be seen having heart-to-hearts with Poison Ivy

as slamming one of Joker's henchmen through the knee with a baseball bat – all while dropping plenty of F-bombs. Because not only is this version of *Harley Quinn* hilarious, touching and irreverent, it's also R-rated.

"The studio called us and literally just said, 'Do you have any interest in doing an R-rated, adult animated Harley Quinn show?' To which,

you know, we couldn't say yes quickly enough," says Patrick Schumacker, who wrote and executive produced the series alongside Justin Halpern and Dean Lorey. The cast, which includes *Big Bang Theory*'s Kaley Cuoco in the title role alongside Alan Tudyk as The Joker and Lake Bell's Ivy, were equally enthusiastic. "It was a no-brainer," says Cuoco, of the opportunity to play Harley. "Who doesn't want

"It was a no-brainer. Who doesn't want to voice one of the most iconic, badass, edgy female characters we need today?"

— Voice actress and exec producer Kaley Cuoco

to voice one of the most iconic, badass, edgy female characters we need today?"

Having first appeared in Bruce Timm's *Batman: The Animated Series* 27 years ago and quickly emerging as a fan-favorite, today there are an overwhelming number of Harley iterations to draw from. For producer Jennifer Coyle, however, the original series was the ob-

vious starting point. "For me, there's only one Harley Quinn, and it's from *Batman Animated*," says Coyle, although she adds that this latest incarnation of Harley shares "DNA" with Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti's comic-book version, while Schumacker also cites DC's *New 52* and *Mad Love* as touchstones.

"We took a nod from [Conner's] design style," Coyle explains. "And we took a nod from the original series, and then we took a bit of the *Suicide Squad* version of Harley with the pink and the blue hair." As for Cuoco, with Harley having been voiced



by a carousel of cherished actors such as Arleen Sorkin and Tara Strong, she decided to focus on putting her own spin on the character rather than mimicking anyone else's. "Harley's iconic enough," Cuoco says. "Also, my voice is extremely recognizable so I didn't want to try a voice that sounded fake and put on."



Wide Influences: According to producer Susan Coyle, the artists were inspired by the Batman animated series as well as Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti's comic-book iteration and the *Suicide Squad* version of the character.

Building a Female Icon

Character designer Shane Glines, who trained under Timm at Warner Bros. was tasked with integrating all the different animated inspirations "and coming up with something that works as perfectly as she does," Coyle says. While creating a coherent version of Harley was a challenge, so was balancing the character's sensuality. "That was a big concern, because this show is really about her evolution as a woman and over-sexualizing the characters could be the opposite of that," Coyle acknowledges. "I mean, we wanted to

be loyal to the characters — like, the woman is wearing vinyl underwear [in Conner's comic-book version] — but having said that, we

took pains to not make her overly sexualized." Not only did that extend to Harley's appearance — of all the characters she went through the most design iterations — but also her body language. "She slouches," says Coyle. "And she never does this doll pose where she's looking vacant and her toes are pointed together like you see a lot in anime shows. We were on a constant lookout to make her not too girly-girl and more just like a real, adult — psychotic — woman."

That much is evident in the narrative, which follows Harley's emotional development as she extricates herself from an abusive relationship with Joker and regains her self-esteem. "We did want it to be emotionally grounded," says Halpern. "That was really important for us throughout the show, [because] if it didn't have any emotional grounding to it, if you didn't care about what Harley cared about, then it's just a lot of people saying 'f***' and a lot of blood."

Meanwhile, her bond with Ivy acts as the linchpin of the series. "It is about a female relationship at its core but with a lot of testosterone in there as well," says Bell. The show neatly zips between poignancy, comedy and senseless violence, with any emotional development punctuated by plenty of gore and meta quips ("Women aren't funny," Joker complains in one scene, before shooting a henchman through the chest).

"There's a naughtiness and kind of an ag-



gressiveness to some of the storylines that I feel like are often held for male characters," says Bell. "And I think that that part of it, getting to do wildly expansive and violent and aggressive heist and action sequences, is really refreshing. The people who are driving that hard comedy but then hard action are the female characters." As well as the female-led cast, the crew included a number of women in the writing room as well as on the production team, with Coyle once again working alongside supervising director Cecilia Aranovic.

Funny, Outrageous and Grounded

"When we pitched the show way back in 2016, we talked about it as like a female version of *Ferris Bueller*," says Halpern, envision-



TV/STREAMING

ing Harley as Ferris and Ivy as Cameron Frye. "There is that sort of classic two-hander buddy comedy." Halpern, Schumacker and Lorey also cite *Rick and Morty*, *Archer* and *Arrested Development* (on which Lorey was a producer) as comedic influences. "It just runs the absolute emotional gamut, from super happy to super violent to super angry to super broken-hearted," says Coyle of the series. Cuoco agrees: "It's edgy, outrageous, aggressive and hilarious, but completely grounded at the same time."

Much of that comedy is driven by the distinctly R-rated humor, which, in addition to graphic violence, includes a ton of f***s. "There was remarkably little pushback from the studio," says Lorey. "We were kind of amazed that they were as willing to go with it as they were. There were very, very few things that they actually pushed back on, although, after a point we did hear a little bit about tonnage. We were very 'f*****'. We cut back a little bit." In fact, after the writers managed to cram 22 F-bombs into the pilot, the studio instituted a cap of eight to nine per episode. "I'd get emails saying, 'Did anybody do a f*** count on episode 20?'" laughs Coyle.

"We've pared back," says Schumacker. "But I don't think it really loses anything. If you're looking for foul language, this is the show for you!"

The team also took obvious delight in being able to poke fun at DC's flagship superheroes, including Batman and Superman. "[The studio] has been great in the sense that, really, they gave us carte blanche to use any of their characters," says Lorey. "I mean, we'll see as the series goes along, there's pretty much no giant character, hero or villain, that's untouched by the show." There was, however, a limit to just how much ragging studio execs were prepared to see some of those characters endure. "I think Batman for certain they are very protective of," says Coyle. "We did pitch one board where Batman — I think they taped a sign to his back that said, 'I f*** bats' and DC was like — [in fact] I think it wasn't even DC. I don't think it even got to that. The [show] executives were like, 'Absolutely not. You can't do that to Batman.' So there are lines."

With Harley taking frequent pops at some of DC's most beloved characters in addition to maiming and killing Gotham's goons, another challenge was keeping the audience on-side. "That came up a lot, especially at the beginning. We were all very concerned that too much violence would make her — that people would not like her anymore," Coyle admits. They mitigated that in part by ensuring Harley sticks to killing universally despised characters such as bankers and henchmen. And even

there the writers tempered some of the more extreme violence, including one idea which involved Harley tearing off someone's head and hitting someone else with the spinal cord. "So we didn't we didn't end up going with that," Coyle deadpans. "And I think that was a wise decision at the end, because overall she is quite a sympathetic character."

The team also built in empathy by ensuring viewers see the world through Harley's eyes, for example by toning down the traditional heroes' color palettes. "Their clothing is a little bit more muted, their colors are a little bit

On top of balancing the action, "hyper-real" violence, snappy dialogue, comedy and heart, the animators (some of whom were based in Korea) managed to deliver almost all 26 episodes in the space of 24 months. With each episode taking almost a year to produce, the team worked across multiple episodes simultaneously. "It was an incredibly demanding show for animators. Like really, really demanding, because it had to be funny," says Schumacker. In many scenes characters talk over each other or during intense action sequences, which proved not only difficult to

'She never does this doll pose where she's looking vacant and her toes are pointed together like you see a lot in anime shows. We were on a constant lookout to make her not too girly-girl and more just like a real, adult — psychotic — woman.'

— Producer Jennifer Coyle



Bad Girls Unite: The show features the voices of Kaley Cuoco as Harley Quinn, Lake Bell as Poison Ivy, Alan Tudyk as Joker and Diedrich Bader as Batman. Jim Rash, Christopher Meloni, Tony Hale, J.B. Smoove, Jason Alexander, Giancarlo Esposito, Tom Kenny, Wanda Sykes, Rahul Kohli, Vanessa Marshall, Will Sasso and Phil LaMarr are all part of the starry cast.



darker because they are the dull ones," Coyle explains. "Harley doesn't think they're cool at all. They're not 'sparkle people' to her." Elsewhere Gotham's colors pop a little brighter than they have in previous iterations of the city. "And things are a little bit more extreme and wild than you might have seen before," adds Lorey. "And that was sort of true of the gore. If it's from Harley's point of view, she revels in all that kind of stuff, so we wanted to lean into that."

Storyboard and animate but also to voice. "I do a ton of screaming and fight scenes that I basically act out in the booth, so my voice tends to get exhausted," says Cuoco. "But it's so worth it because I no longer have to pay my therapist. This has become my therapy!"

No doubt Dr. Harleen Quinzel would thoroughly approve. ♦

Harley Quinn debuted on DC Universe on November 29.

Green Mission

'Kid Demand' and the Climate

By Mike DeSeve

I've been hearing this funny idea circulating – that Greta Thunberg, the now-famous young girl who's been leading worldwide kid climate marches, is somehow manufactured. A put-up job by some larger group.

I've been connecting with Greta's managers and handlers, both in her organization and at The Intercept, which helped with her U.S. trip, and everything about her story, as far as I can see, is legitimate.

But so what if it weren't? Her message is undeniably legitimate – and would be even if she were an inflatable animatronic puppet controlled by a secret society of fruit bats. To paraphrase it: "Hey grownups, read the actual climate science – and act accordingly!"

Which is to say, act *fast*. This is not climate change anymore: It's a climate emergency. And who is acting accordingly right now, while we grownups do not?

The kids all over the world. According to the U.N. and *The Washington Post*, the overwhelming majority of kids globally are worried about climate – and a stunning one fourth of them had already taken action by this year. Then came this fall.

Urgent Action Required

From Greta's solo actions in Sweden, to 2.1 million kids marching 18 months later, to 6.7 million this September, just five months after that. That's an incredibly swift trend.

And if you're in these marches, you hear the raw urgency in these kids' voices. Our industry always looks to pinpoint that elusive, magical thing: "kid demand." Well, if 6.7 million marching kids demanding change is not "kid demand," I don't know what is. And unless the climate fixes itself, it's just the beginning.

But just *what* are they demanding? And exactly *how* do we engage with it?

Greta's camp at first struggled to see the connection between kids' media and kids' climate marches. We struggle as well. Whether you're an animator, a producer or even a top

kids' TV exec, odds are you've spent your share of time lying in bed paralyzed by the latest terrifying science news, feeling utterly powerless. Me too.

The thing is, we're dead wrong. Kids' media

'If 6.7 million marching kids demanding change is not kid demand – what is?'

is actually a pivotal part of the climate solution – a critical bridge between kids and important ideas. Between panic and hope. When those kids march, they are not leading. They are demanding that *we* lead, so they can be kids. They are demanding our guidance, *our* ideas about where to go with their climate fears, about how they can help.

great period of social upheaval, the '60s, when TV went radical to meet the demands of a young audience craving an understanding of a messed-up planet.

I was one of these kids, born into a world jam-packed with assassinations, race riots, gender battles and war. The thing that gave me perspective, hope, a guiding light in this dark time? Tons of hilarious TV that faced the chaos head-on and took the piss out of all of it; number-one hits shows like *Laugh-In* and *All in the Family* that made fun of everything and everyone involved – from the old bigots to the young revolutionaries. Crazy as it sounds, it was family TV that made it fun.

And woven through all of it: Ideas. Big ideas and small about how to engage with – and fix – a world gone haywire.

But probably the most liberating idea of all? *To lighten up*. That none of us have to be perfect, or even too serious – we can be heroes anyway. We can be our imperfect, ridiculous selves and we can still change the world. The producers that figured out how to connect on this level were not only doing good, they were wildly successful, while their less-relevant competitors were left to die by the side of the ratings road.

So what is today's army of kids demanding? (And what will millions more be demanding?) Someone to unleash in them those unquenchable kid powers of possibility, humor, excitement and – ludicrous as it might sound – fun, as they engage in the fight of their lives.

That "someone" is you and me. And those kid powers are what might help save us all.

Mike de Seve is creative director of Baboon Animation, a global kids' writing and development company. Contact him and the climate gang at captain@captainunlimited.com.

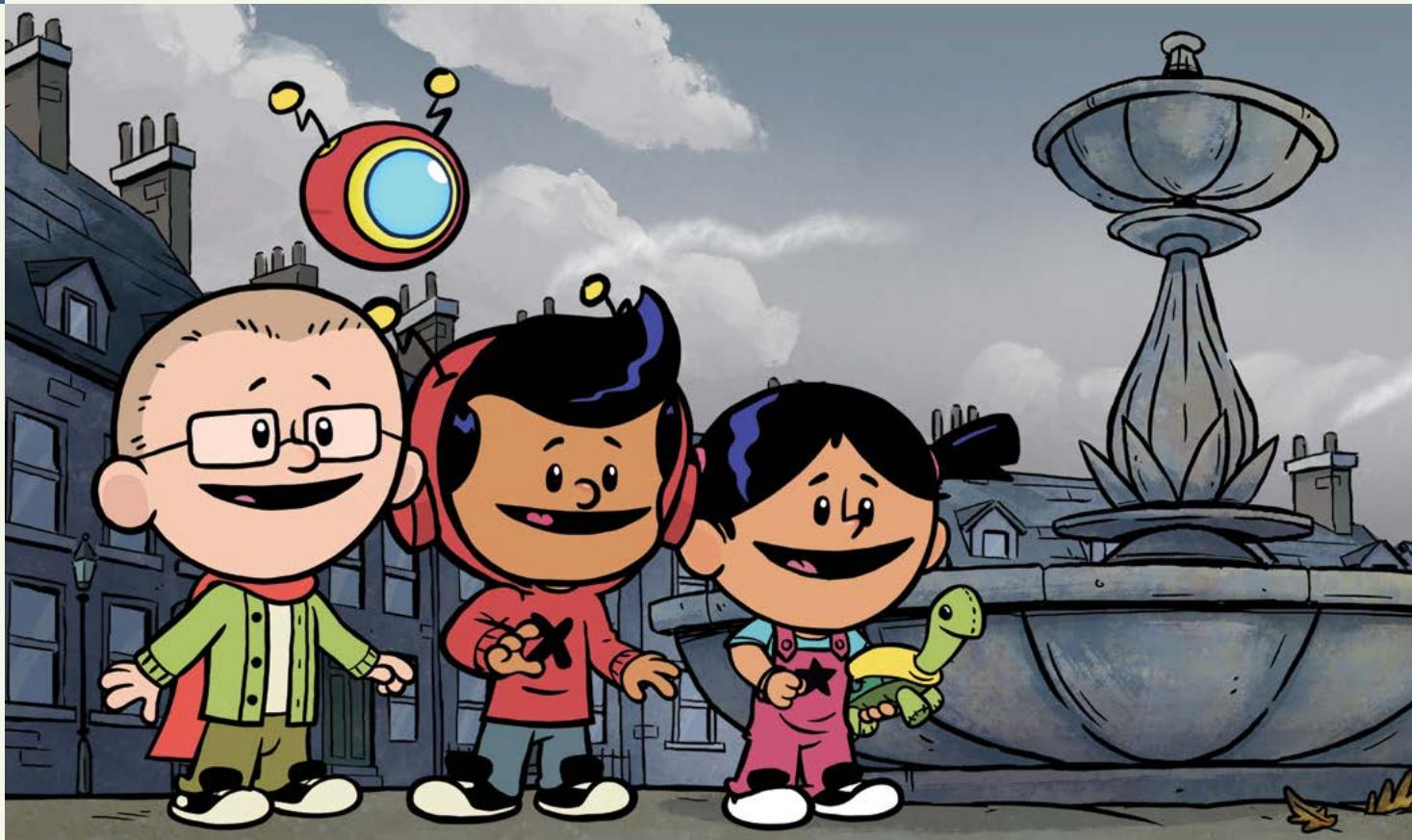


Students from around the world walked out of classrooms to bring attention to climate crisis. Lisa Simpson gave a speech about the issue in 2007, predicting Greta Thunberg's powerful 2019 speech at the U.N.

But on a more fundamental level, they're craving hope, heroes, and some way to find humor in all of this. Hope, heroes and humor: exactly the three things that our industry is best at. Plus, we're already hooked into mass kid-audiences globally. The opportunity to connect is enormous.

So, okay, the demand is there – but how do we fill it? Just like they did during that last





When They Were Kids...

The new PBS show *Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum* puts an animated spin on Brad Meltzer's popular books about famous historical figures.

By Ramin Zahed

If you have young kids in your family or have visited a grade school in the past few years, you will be familiar with Brad Meltzer's hugely popular series of books based on famous figures in history, such as *I Am Amelia Earhart* and *I Am Abraham Lincoln*. The books, which are illustrated by Chris Eliopoulos and published under the umbrella banner *Ordinary People Change the World*, have been hugely popular and have been praised for the way Meltzer shows what well-known people such as Marie Curie, Harriet Tubman and Walt Disney were like when they were kids.

Last month, PBS debuted a new series based on Meltzer's books, titled *Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum*. The show, which is produced by 9 Story Media Group's Brown Bag Films, centers on the adventures of Xavier, his sister Yadina and their friend Brad, who visit a magical Secret

Museum to travel back in time and meet real-life historical characters when they were kids.

Meltzer says he wrote the books initially because he wanted his own children to have heroes worthy of admiration. "There was this Harvard study that pointed out that, when we were all children, our parents taught us that being smart was really important," says the author. "But today, because of social media, kids believe that being popular and getting likes is

"We always wanted a show that could talk about the ideas of character, influences and accomplishments without having to depend on the construct of biography."

— Linda Simensky, head of content, PBS Kids

important. We wanted to make a show to fight against that and teach kids about real strength, perseverance and the importance of kindness. That was the true North we were heading."

Championing this inspired adaptation of the books was none other than animation veteran,

and head of content for PBS Kids, Linda Simensky, who has overseen the creation of some of the most acclaimed animated shows of the past 30 years on Cartoon Network and PBS.

Good Influence

"Brad's books were the first to feature accomplished adults when they were kids, and we loved the idea of presenting these kids to our audience," says Simensky. "We always wanted a show that could talk about the ideas of character, influences and accomplishments without having to depend on the construct of biog-



raphy. Brad is a unique thinker and he's got definite goals for what he hopes this show can do. That all comes through in the show, and we all felt that made it special, as well. It might actually change the way kids think!"

The first season, which is comprised of 37



half-hours and a one-hour special, is exec produced by Metzler, Eliopoulos, Vince Comisso, Fonda Snyder and Rob Weisbach, and directed by Cory Bobiak (*Peg + Cat*). "We spent two years in development with Fonda and Rob, and Chris was drawing everything. The whole look of the show is based on his distinctive original book illustrations. The one thing PBS kept saying was to make it more like the books. They knew that the secret sauce wasn't the history lesson: It was the character lessons."

The look of the show is based on Eliopoulos' original book illustrations. "His art is really our secret weapon," says Meltzer. "His style is a wonderful combination of *Peanuts* and *Calvin and Hobbes*! But it's really all unique to Chris. We both felt that this show just had to be a 2D-animated show. We knew that only 2D was going to give us the texture that we were after. CG-animation on TV can feel sterile, and 2D can really make you feel something in TV animation. We all felt so much more connected to lower tech than higher tech!"

A story about Meltzer's interactions with his daughter illustrates the fresh approach of the series and the books. "I wanted her to look at people like Amelia Earhart as her role models, not the reality show stars of today," he remembers. "But when I told her about Earhart, her reaction was, 'Oh, big deal, everyone flies over the ocean!' It wasn't until I told her about Earhart building a homemade rollercoaster when she was only seven years old, that she became interested in her. Xavier is based on my youngest son, who is also a

dreamer and his head is always in the clouds, but he can't tie his own shoes. His sister Yadina is just like my own daughter, and Brad – well, he is the most handsome character, so he's just like me," jokes Meltzer. "Brad is our comic relief."

Building a Better Tomorrow

Looking back at the development and production process of the show, Meltzer says

"We want kids to realize that these celebrated men and women were once kids just like they are today. These characters look at the audience the same way Mister Rogers used to look at me in his show and told me that I was special."

— Brad Meltzer, author and exec producer



he couldn't be happier. "The team were all superstars," he recalls. "We are all parents of young kids, and we all want better heroes for our kids to look up to. We were writing from a personal space. Our director Cory knew that we had to do the show in Chris's style, but he was doing all these down shots and swipes with the camera that were so unique. When we screened the pilot of the show at PBS in Virginia, we watched kids react to the show

through a one-way mirror. That was the most incredible, amazing and humbling experience. The notes we were getting from PBS actually helped us make the show better."

Meltzer says he loves the idea that the show might inspire a five-year old in the audience, who will look back at Xavier the way he and his colleagues were inspired by shows such as *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street* when they were young. "It's a lovely idea about the impact a show can have on a young mind. It's all about the legacy of the past and passing it forward to a new generation."

The producers also made sure that they consulted with specific experts on each subject and famous personality for each individual episode. "For each episode, we have a person who was brought in as an expert in that specific sliver of history," says the author. "We even had Billie Jean King come in as the expert on her episode. These voices are beautifully different. The culture today doesn't celebrate differences and diversity. The most beautiful part of the show is that we offer different sensibilities to each one of the stories. For example, we had experts from the blind and deaf community offer their feedback on the Helen Keller episode."

According to Meltzer, one of the mistakes we make about heroes in our culture is that we build statues and worship at their feet. "We do them a disservice by not remembering the moments that they had doubts and fears in their hearts," he explains. "On our show, audiences can see these heroes as kids just like them. Each episode starts and ends with characters looking at the viewers at home. We want

kids to realize that these celebrated men and women were once kids just like they are today. They look at the kids the same way Mister Rogers used to look at me in his show and tell me that I was special!" ♦

Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum airs on PBS KIDS and the free PBS KIDS Video App. Xavier-themed games are also available on pbskids.org and the PBS KIDS Games App.



Ruth Fielding
and Camilla Deakin

An Unexpected Guest

U.K.'s award-winning Lpus Films delivers a charming, 2D-animated adaptation of *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*.

By Ramin Zahed

U.K. TV audiences who tune in to Lpus Film's latest animated special this month will find a delightful addition to the country's growing number of beautiful half-hour projects made especially for the holiday season. The new special, which airs on Channel 4 on Christmas is based on the popular 1968 children's book by Judith Kerr (1923-2019) and features the voices of Benedict Cumberbatch, Tamsin Greig, David Oyelowo and Paul Whitehouse. It tells the simple, yet imaginative story of how the everyday routine of a mother and daughter is disrupted by the unexpected arrival of very hungry, stripy tiger!

The show's producer Ruth Fielding tells us that the book has been one of her all-time favorites since she was a young girl herself, and she and her team at Lpus had been tracking the rights for some time. "Then the opportunity came along to pitch our vision to

HarperCollins Children's Books, the publisher, and Judith Kerr, the author and illustrator of the book, and we jumped at the chance," she notes. "We started work on adapting the book into a screenplay with writer Joanna Harrison, who wrote our previous films *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* and *The Snowman and The Snowdog* in 2017. The animation was all produced and drawn in house at Lpus Films' studio in Lon-

to do something really fun. He adds, "Because we were sticking to the brilliant simplicity of the book without adding loads to the story, the characters had a chance to breathe and to act out their parts in a really fun way. This was especially true for the tiger, who had the time to be the suave, unhurried, supremely confident, Roger Moore-ish feline he should be."

Shaw mentions that there were also really interesting design and narrative opportunities when it came to sticking to the style of the book. "In the book, Judith Kerr pictures the characters much of the time against

"We like to think we modeled our business and style of doing business on the late producer and good friend of ours, John Coates. We really enjoy the craft of working on a single film and having the time to create something really beautiful and long lasting."

— Producer Ruth Fielding

don, with a handful of animators and colorists working remotely."

The special is directed by Robin Shaw, who also helmed the studio's 2016 offering *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* and was art director on *Ethel & Ernest*. He tells us that he was drawn to the new project mainly because it allowed him

a blank page, so it was exciting to use all that white space in the film to free us from the confines of a normal kitchen or background," he points out. "The white space could be anything. It could be as big or small as I wanted, and I could introduce background elements as needed and even change the location without



the characters actually having to go anywhere. The film really gave me the chance to use interesting techniques usually seen in more independent and less mainstream animation, but in a way that was entirely appropriate for the story."

A 2D Throwback to Yesteryear

The project also allowed Shaw to invoke all of the influences he had soaked up as a kid, watching animation and British films of the 1960s. "The book is timeless but very identifiable with a certain period, so I wanted the film to have that quality, too," he notes. "You should be able to watch it and think it could've conceivably have been made at any time since the book came out, so everything from the music and sound recording to the design and layout has drawn on techniques and styles of the period."

Shaw says he always starts each project with pencil and paper. "For me, it's the most immediate and instinctive way of getting ideas down and sketching out different set-ups and camera moves," he explains. "As soon as possible, however, we started working in TVPaint. We used a number of bespoke brushes and pens in TVPaint to replicate the look of everything from felt tips to mapping pen nibs, all used frame by frame to retain that hand-drawn look. I was very keen from the start that the animation, backgrounds and color work should all be completed within TVPaint and not be 'over-produced' by using too many techniques and bits of software. Judith Kerr's original illustrations were drawn using a handful of techniques and media to wonderful effect, so it seemed natural that to give the film the same aesthetic coherence



and to follow the style of the book we should do the same."

The director and his team of about 60 artists worked together to make the artwork feel like it had all been prepared on a few layers of cels and put under a rostrum camera to be filmed. "Creatively, the whole thing came very naturally, but in practical terms I suppose the trickiest thing of all was to keep it simple," notes Shaw. "Doing this meant having a big

"Judith Kerr's original illustrations were drawn using a handful of techniques and media to wonderful effect, so it seemed natural that to give the film the same aesthetic coherence and to follow the style of the book we should do the same."

— Director Robin Shaw

team of really skilled artists to make each frame completely finished with as little being left for comp as possible."

When asked about how Lapus manages to craft these beautiful, heart-warming animated tales that air during the holiday season in the U.K., Fielding is quite modest. "We like to think we modeled our business and style of doing business on the late producer and good friend of ours, John Coates," she says. "His company TV Cartoons made lots of TVsSpecials, some of

which were based on Raymond Briggs' books, like ours have been. We really enjoy the craft of working on a single film and having the time to create something really beautiful and long lasting. However, the bread and butter of series work is always a draw."

Fielding continues to be optimistic about the animation scene in the U.K., despite Brexit and other impending obstacles. "The animation industry in the U.K. is booming," she says. "We have tax credits, fantastic talent and the exchange rate is favorable for others to work with us at the moment. Brexit is looming and we're worried about losing access to funding pots like the E.U. MEDIA Fund and about retaining our crew, who come from other countries within the E.U. However, animation has always been a team sport, and so we will continue to co-produce with territories within Europe and further afield despite the political climate."

Both Fielding and Shaw hope the special will bring more joy and cheer into viewers' homes. "We hope audiences will, quite simply, feel really happy they've watched it," says Shaw. "I want them to start smiling within a few seconds and keep smiling right through to the end. One of the most satisfying moments during production was when we showed the animatic to some animation students and the two very down-to-Earth college technicians sitting at the back turned to each other about halfway through and broke into the biggest, warmest smiles. That's what we want people to get out of it!" ♦

Lupus Films' *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* premieres on Channel 4 on Christmas.



Brave Heart

Michael Morpurgo's *Mimi and the Mountain Dragon* becomes a musical animated holiday special thanks to U.K. studio Factory.

U.K.-based animation studio Factory is best known for producing series such as *Clangers*, *Scream Street*, *Newzoids* and *Norman Picklestripes*. This month, the studio along with Leopard Pictures, offers a new 2D-animated adaptation of Sir Michael Morpurgo's children's book *Mimi and the Mountain Dragon*. The holiday tale centers on a young girl who discovers a baby dragon in a woodshed and decides to reunite the baby with her fearsome mother, who lives in her castle lair in the mountains.

Factory's managing director Phil Chalk says he was on board with the project the minute co-exec producer Kristian Smith of Leopard Pictures showed him a treatment of the 25-minute special.

"As soon as Kristian outlined his vision for the project and the potential collaborators, I was hooked," says Chalk. "We both vowed from that day to try and make it happen!"

The special, which premieres on BBC One this month, will include a special introduction by Morpurgo himself, who also wrote the best-selling 1982 novel *War Horse*. The film is narrated through classical music in an original score written by Oscar-winning composer Rachel Portman (*The Little Prince*, *The Piano*) and performed by the BBC Philharmonic, featuring singers from the Hallé's family of choirs and recorded at MediaCityUK, Salford.

True to the Art

Mimi and the Mountain Dragon is being produced at Factory's studios in Manchester with a European team of talented animators. According to Chalk, the animators use a combination of Moho (formerly known as Anime Studio), traditional hand-drawn layouts and effects, together with After Effects for the final compositing process. The look and feel of the film is inspired by the work of illustrator Emily Gravett, who has

worked closely with the producers to provide key inspirational character and background art.

Chalk says the opportunity to work with such a talented team headed by Morpurgo, Portman, Gravett and writer Owen Sheers has been a real treat. He adds, "The opportunity to combine traditional 2D animation techniques within a digital workflow has also been enlightening and will, I am sure, influence other films we work on in the future."

Of course, producing the special has had its share of challenges. Chalk says finding the right blend of experience and traditional animation skills was one of the team's early challenges. He adds, "We also had to embark on a period of R&D to create a line that reflected

"The opportunity to combine traditional 2D animation techniques within a digital workflow has also been enlightening and will, I am sure influence other films we work on in the future."

— Producer Phil Chalk

Gravett's charming illustrative style. Working exclusively to a music track without dialogue has also been one of the biggest challenges, and I hope we have done justice to Rachel Portman's amazing score."



Because *Mimi* is a music-led piece, Chalk and his team wanted Portman to have as much creative freedom as possible. "But at the same time, due to an ambitious shooting schedule, we had to ensure that we could start animation before Rachel was able to fully orches-



trate the score," he adds. "To make this possible, Rachel composed a piano guide track to our original animatic for key timing and dramatic pacing. We then provided full animation layouts for her to work to thereafter, before fully orchestrating the piece. Working in



this way ensured that key timing was consistent throughout each phase of the music production, resulting in a very efficient, final recording session with the wonderful BBC

Philharmonic orchestra."

When asked about the state of animation in the U.K., Chalk responds, "We have undoubtedly benefited enormously from the U.K. animation tax credit introduced in 2016. I am

concerned, however, about the lack of original commissions from U.K.-based broadcasters and in turn, the relatively low budgets for U.K.-produced content. This is bound to result in slower growth within the TV animation sector in the U.K. as a whole if this situation continues."

For now, Chalk is excited to see his vision come to animated life in homes across his country this holiday season. "We hope that the film resonates with a kids and

family audience and hope that it has the potential to become a Christmas evergreen," he says. "But I bet every producer says that!" ♦

***Mimi and the Mountain Dragon* premieres on BBC One in the U.K. this Christmas.**



Fantastic Beasts: The team at Framestore created the series' giant white bear and the characters' animal daemons using state-of-the-art digital VFX. Pictured: Actress Dafne Keen as the heroine Lyra Belacqua.

Angels and Daemons

Russell Dodgson shares the details of producing the stunning effects for HBO and BBC One's acclaimed adaptation of *His Dark Materials*.

By Trevor Hogg

Back in 2007, the dense, richly imagined world of author Philip Pullman inspired the 2007 feature *The Golden Compass*. Pullman's alternate universe is a place where the digital revolution has never taken place, and humans are connected to their souls in the form of a daemon animal. Last month, a splendid new adaptation of the author's best-selling trilogy *His Dark Materials* (of which *The Golden Compass* is the first book) debuted on HBO and BBC One.

To bring this alternate world to life and to deliver the first season's over 2000 visual effects shots, the producers reached out to series VFX supervisor Russell Dodgson (Mars) and exec VFX producer James Whitlam (Christopher Robin) and the team at Framestore, which was also part of the Oscar-winning team responsible for the original *Golden Compass* feature.

Framestore London and Montreal produced the vast majority of the creature and environment work, with Framestore Pune doing some paint, roto and compositing.

"Framestore is uniquely positioned [to han-

dle a television production schedule] because we've got an amazing creature pipeline, and some of the best visual effects artists and animators in the world," notes Dodgson. "I was fortunate enough to have a lot of those individuals on the show. In terms of the quality, that's where the clarity of vision comes in, knowing the characters inside out and the production having the trust in us that we could efficiently get a good result."

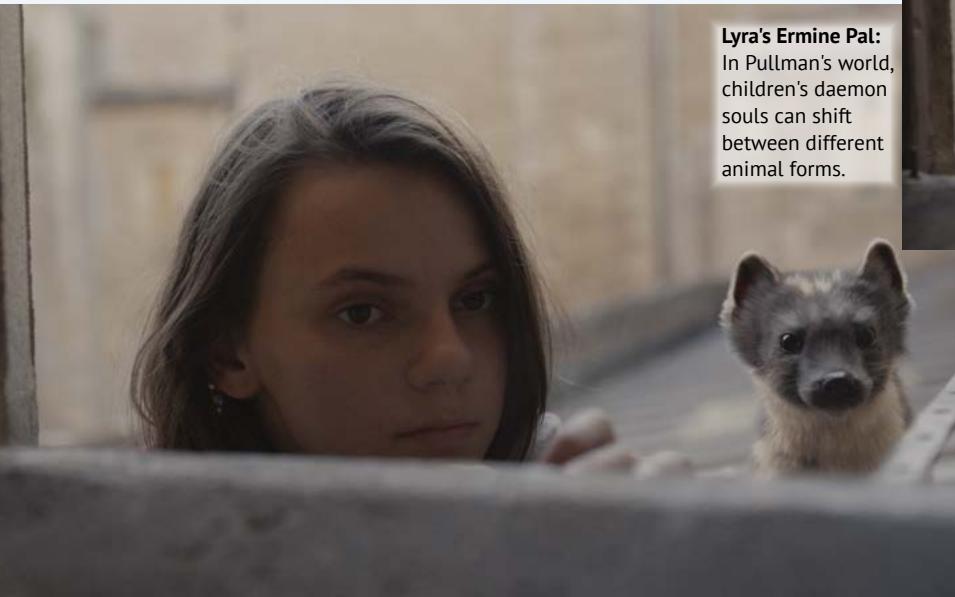
Less Creatures, More Time

Framestore was brought late into the production process, with Dodgson suggesting a major change in regards to the daemon called Pantalaimon (voiced by Kit Connor) who is spiritually connected to the heroine of the story, Lyra Belacqua (Dafne Keen). "In the book, Pan probably takes on 35 or 40 different creature forms, and I was adamant that we had to reduce that number down to eight," reveals Dodgson. "We needed people to visually fall in love, understand and learn the mannerisms of the character. The only way you can do that is with screen time."



It was important for audience members to never lose track of Pan as he takes on different animal forms. "There was always this risk of not understanding who is who," Dodgson explains. "We made sure that Pan had a dominant white property to him, so he's an ermine or Arctic tern or Arctic fox or magpie or a pine marten, which has a white chest. There was a bit of connective tissue through those characters. The other thing as well is the proximity to the person and the energy of the animation."

Earlier on, a couple of rules were established for the world's daemon transformations. "We never physically show a daemon changing from something small to something large or



Lyra's Ermine Pal:
In Pullman's world,
children's daemon
Souls can shift
between different
animal forms.



vice versa," says Dodgson. "It's more important that the suspension of disbelief is maintained rather than try to do something that is going to look rubbish on screen. We went from a magpie to an ermine or a magpie to a pine marten quite a lot, because we could fold the wings to create a complementary silhouette and foreshorten the daemon with camera angle, so it would take up the same screen space of the daemon it was going to. Then we would make those transformations happen through movement so there was a flow to them. If we wanted to transform from something large to something small, then we would do it off camera because, hopefully, at that point it is just part of the fabric of the show."

Animal Attraction

The emotional state of the series' young heroine, Lyra, is reflected in the actions and behavior of Pan. "There's a scene where Lyra is going to jump out of a window and go do something," explains Dodgson. "If Lyra is in tune with herself, she and her daemon will jump at the same time. If Lyra is feeling truly bold inside, then Pan will jump first. If Lyra is acting brave but inside is scared, Pan will hang back. It's about trying to use the daemons to offer an extra depth or understanding of the character's internal emotions, rather than just animating an animal in a shot."

It should be mentioned that the series' daemons also have the ability to speak. "We decided to keep the physicality and structure of the animals' faces the same as they are in nature," says Dodgson. "Then, what you do is lean into the physicality and performance."

The VFX artists also had to remove some of

the more animalistic traits of the series' daemons. As Dodgson explains, "Daemons have a human consciousness. It's interesting to look at reference of an animal moving around and being its natural self. In regards to the rabbit, we decided to take two thirds of the sniffing but to keep the animation of the ears twitching, because that still felt in character for curiosity or inquisitiveness. The process of being reductive with the creatures was important. That last thing you do is ask, 'What do you add?' For Hester [daemon for Lee Scoresby], we added more blinking because Lee [Lin-Manuel Miranda] blinks a lot when he gets surprised or is asked questions."

Enabling the 1,000 shots for the daemons

'In the book, Pan probably takes on 35 or 40 different creature forms, and I was adamant that we had to reduce that number down to eight. We needed people to visually fall in love, understand and learn the mannerisms of the character.'

— **VFX supervisor Russell Dodgson**

and 385 of the bears was the on-set puppeteering methodology. "It was important to make sure that we got what was needed without completely destroying the flow of the shoot," notes Dodgson. "Rob Duncan [Mary Poppins Returns], our on-set VFX supervisor, and I worked out our methodology — which was blocking out with the daemons, shooting a puppet pass, taking the puppets away, shooting a clean pass and getting our references. We were getting clean plates and passes from day one. The only time we kept the puppeteers in camera was when the performers did so much better with the puppet there, whether it be the eyelines or emotion."

HDRIs, grey balls and Macbeth charts were utilized to capture correct lighting references,

and sets were LiDAR scanned. "We would use the LiDAR and project the HDRIs onto that set to get accurate lighting setups. The metadata from the camera was piped into our setups in Nuke; that allowed us to have the correct focal distance and depth of field in our shots. We would artistically augment on top of that or correct where it wasn't quite right."

Dodgson says he started the bear fight scene by wrestling a stuntman for two hours with a large group of people filming the action on their mobile phones! "We worked out a basic outline of the fight, sent that over to the animators in Montreal and gave them some references from nature," he adds. "Then, they sent back some suggestions and it was tweaked until we had a good outline for a scene. Painting Practice and Dan May, who provided the previz, post-viz and concept art for the show upfront, had built a version of the bear palace in Unreal. Framestore then took their animation and put that into the set. Our director, Jamie Childs [Doctor Who], did a virtual camera shoot to work out roughly what we were going to be doing. A full-size practical set of the bear palace was built."

As Dodgson points out, the augmented reality application Vanishing Point allowed the team to attach an AR sensor in front of the camera that would feedback to Unreal. "In Unreal, we would register and align the set



and animation with the real space," he notes. "Then in the viewfinder, the camera operator could see the bears live-composited over the real set in real-time. We used that to shoot the plates needed for the sequence. In addition, we also used various puppets rigs to help when we wanted to do something more ad hoc or spontaneous that wasn't prepped in VR. We used high and low tech solutions to get us through the show." ♦

His Dark Materials is produced by BBC Studios, New Line Cinema and Bad Wolf for BBC One and HBO. The series will continue to air on HBO through December. A second season of the show began filming even before the series debuted.

Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry



Acer ConceptD 7

I'm typing this review on the Acer ConceptD 7 laptop with a Quadro RTX 3000 with 6GB of RAM inside. I don't know. Is that overkill – for writing Google Docs? I don't feel like I'm writing any faster. But fortunately, I've also installed pieces of the Adobe Creative Cloud, The Foundry's Nuke and Mari, and Autodesk's Maya 2019 and Max 2020; just to give me a healthy sampling of how they perform on this dual ninth gen Intel Core i7 proc running at 2.6 Ghz with 32 GB of RAM.

Despite the slim .7 inch physical profile and 4.6 lbs., no one could categorize the ConceptD as "slight." The 15.6" monitor displays at 4K UHD, which is cool and all, but more important is the rated color accuracy reproducing the Pantone Matching System, and 100% of the Adobe RGB gamut. What that means is that if you are in color-sensitive stuff – specifically color grading in DaVinci, compositing in After Effects or Nuke, or photography editing like



Lightroom – you are confident that what you are seeing is an accurate representation.

The chassis looks and feels smooth and solid. It has a ceramic coating applied through a MAO (Micro-Arc Oxidation) process, which has to do with a lot of scientific things (which I encourage you to look into if you are into that). The result is a super hard shell that is pleasing to the touch, protective and resistant to the elements, retaining the pristine look of the laptop for longer.

The design is also meant to distribute heat and reduce sound, and for normal processes (like writing this review), the laptop is nearly silent, and I'm cradling it on my lap without any worry about it getting too hot. However, once I fire up 3ds Max and load up a scene with glossy reflections, motion blur, depth of field and rendering through V-Ray Next GPU, it didn't take too long for the fans to spin up, the

bottom to noticeably heat up, and my office-mate to say, "Is that your laptop making that noise?" But to be fair, I haven't run into a laptop (or desktop without liquid cooling) that I can't get to heat up and scream. But it's super quiet and cool the rest of the time.

The ConceptD 7 is an absolutely valid mobile equivalent to a workstation. I can have it on set with me (like I do right this very moment), able to bring up shots for the director to look at, and be certain that my display is going to be darn close if not pixel accurate to the DIT. I can develop and audition 3D animation or camera moves – and with the RTX card and progressive rendering, I can be showing accurate (enough) renders interactively.

This review laptop is more robust than the baseline model, but even without the RTX display card or high-capacity 2TB solid state drives, you are still getting a powerful device with a 4K color accurate display and a sleek looking, low-profile mini-workstation for under \$2,000. Plus, there is room to upgrade.

Website: store.acer.com

Price: \$2,299.99

LIFTiD

I'm going to go off the beaten track here to investigate a product that doesn't provide faster render times, or better ways to sculpt in 3D, or plugins that create cool particle effects. It's about something a little deeper and more ubiquitous than any specific art tool. It's about productivity.

We who work in the visual effects, animation and video game worlds are no stranger to fatigue. We burn ourselves out by working too many hours to hit deadlines that are too short. We try and compensate with caffeine, sugar, energy drinks, microdosing or Adderall – or worse. These will keep you going, but there is a long term cost to your health.

There is a thing called transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS). It's kind of all the rage in the neuroscience circles, and there are over 4,000 published studies about its benefits. What it boils down to is a mild electrical stimulation to the cerebral cortex, which primes the neurons (for lack of a more scientific term) to be more likely to fire. The result is increased focus, attention,

productivity and memory.

RPW Technology is a New York based start-up that has created a product called LIFTiD to tap into this research and deliver a product in the form of a lightweight headband that will provide tDCS through a couple of electrodes. The user wears the device for 20 minutes a day to give those neurons a boost and refocus and re-energize.

I've been working with the device for the past month, and while the impact isn't a bolt of energy like you'd get chugging a Red Bull, the benefits are still noticeable. I realize how "unscientific" this sounds, and yet, it is purely anecdotal and entirely uncontrolled. I'm not tracking what I'm eating, my sleeping habits or whether or not I had my morning coffee. But I will say that I can sense a difference. And that is enough for me to want to continue using it and recommend it to anyone who is into novice-level bio-hacking and wants to find alternative, non-chemical ways to up your productivity.

Obviously, check precautions before you buy it – there are a few medical and physical conditions that you should pay attention to. (You should only use it once a day for 20 minutes. You shouldn't use it if you have any electronic implanted medical devices in the brain or head, a pacemaker or a defibrillator. You shouldn't use it if you have a neurological condition or disease. You shouldn't use it on any other areas of the body, etc.) You are playing with your brain after all.

Website: getliftid.com

Price: \$149◆

Todd Sheridan Perry is a VFX supervisor and digital artist who has worked on many acclaimed features such as *Black Panther*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Speed Racer* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. You can reach him at todd@teaspoonvfx.com.



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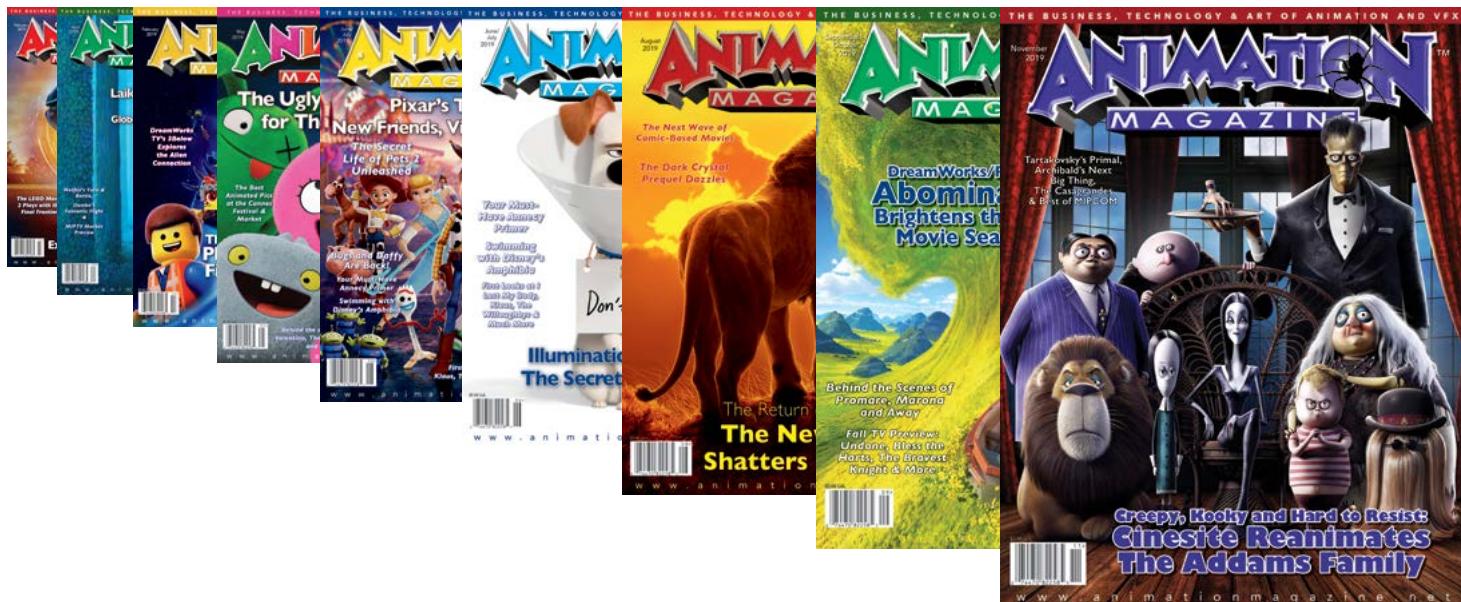
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The Best Tech and Tools of 2019

By Todd Sheridan Perry

I have to say that 2019 was a very good year for tech in animation and visual effects, probably more so than any past year I've put together this list for. Let us not tarry:



Unreal Engine

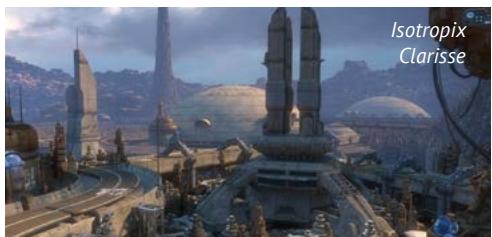
Unreal Engine 4.23. Always a popular one, and with the incorporation of RTX tech there is no place to go but up. Most significant to myself are the virtual production tools that Epic has developed or supported, streamlining incorporating what was

once post-production actually into the production and pre-production process.

Nvidia RTX Series. It was announced two SIGGRAPHs ago, but the technology is spreading like a virus in both gaming, production and big industry level cards like the 2080 Ti, Titan RTX and the Quadro 6000.



Isotropix Clarisse. It may not be new, but it made the list nevertheless. And I had my first chance to dig into it a bit this year. The amount of data Clarisse can chomp on without a significant slow-



down is mind blowing.

Apple ARKit 3 and RealityKit. Here you have accessible augmented reality development tool right in your iOS device. The latest includes people recognition and motion capture to detect when people are in your camera frame, and allow them to interact or be immersed in the AR environment.



Oculus Insight's inside-out tracking. Offers the ability to determine position data of a VR head without external sensors or equipment by using SLAM (Simultaneous Localization and Mapping).



Cached Playback in Maya 2019.

This helps speeding viewport animation playback. There is nothing more important to an animator than seeing animation in real time, and if you don't have to prerender for review, you save gobs of time.

Blender 2.8. Blender has been around for a long time, and given its open source nature, it's taken a while for it to mature. It is now starting to take business away from the big guys and democratize the 3D world.



Rust programming language.

This open-source programming language similar to C++ has an emphasis on memory safety and concurrency. It has been the most-loved language for the last four years running.



USD 19.11. This Universal Scene Description was developed by Pixar and is available as open source. It's a way to define the elements and parameters of those elements in a scene that remains consistent from department to department. It's not new this year, but the amount of traction it has gained in the industry is phenomenal. The 19.11 release is pretty, pretty robust.



Image credit: Model by Christina Faraj © Pixar, HDRP lighting by Laurent Harduin



SideFX Solaris and LOPS. This is a new context within Houdini to support look dev, lighting and layout tasks using the aforementioned USD – and it's a huge deal.

Deepfake. Yes, this technology is providing us with lots of smiles. How can you not want to see Nicolas Cage in every movie? But as it advances – and in deep learning, the more information you feed it, the more advanced it gets – the more mind-blowing and frightening the results are. I'm using it in an actual production to change news interviews – for a fictitious timeline.



Deepfake



way to access the engine.

3Delight + NSI API. 3Delight is a RenderMan-compliant render engine, and its Nodal Scene Interface API is what is used to describe the 3D scene. It replaces the outdated API and provides for a simple but powerful

Autodesk Bifrost. Starting out as a fluid simulator in Maya, Bifrost has grown into an ICE-like node-based workflow that Maya users have been lustng for since the dawn of man, and ex-Softimage user. have been missing for nearly as long.



Google Maps AR. It uses the camera on your device to allow Google Maps to better determine where you are by recognizing architecture around you,



Google Maps AR.

and it also places signs and directions into the environment (through the viewport of your device) to help show where you need to go. We just need to incorporate *Pokémon GO!* and the world will be perfect.

Unity 2019 HDRP. While you

can dev for multiple platforms, Unity has set up different pipelines targeting specific platforms.

The High Definition Render Pipeline is for your PCs and consoles, where you can push the performance closer to photoreal levels. It's the ideal tool for developing and/or converting projects for high fidelity in a real-time environment.

Azure Kinect DK. This is the next step up from the Kinect using AI to assist with the vision and hearing systems, utilizing a 12-megapixel RGB camera along with a 1-megapixel depth camera, orientation sensor and a seven microphone array. While the original Kinect was mainly focused on games and entertainment, the Azure Kinect DK is robust enough to make its way into more professional and industrial applications. The volumetric capture allows for interactive VR experience with performance. Pretty fancy! ♦

Azure Kinect DK.



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Client Negotiation Tactics

(Part 2 of 2)

Providing production timeframe estimates to a client up front is sometimes even trickier than providing a cost estimate (see last month's article, Client Negotiation Tactics Part 1 of 2).

Being that time is of far greater value than money, identifying a client's firm deadline and establishing an agreed upon turnaround time is the most critical aspect of any production.

Withholding Information

Unfortunately, the item that tends to be the most difficult to get a straight answer from a client is a firm deadline. Clients try to hold back this information as if it will provide them with a benefit or some type of financial gain by doing so.

Some clients may feel that if they hold back the actual due date, you may offer up a turnaround time that is sooner than they really need, which would somehow be advantageous to them. This being the case, these clients will do everything they can to suppress this information so they don't feel like they're shooting themselves in the foot by gifting you with "extra" time when you might commit to delivering sooner.

Under Their Thumb

Additionally, there is an old-school mentality still prevalent today that makes some clients insist on trying to be as hard-nosed and overly demanding as possible to always keep their service providers in check so they never feel comfortable or become complacent.

The goal of this tactic is to make service providers feel like they are never truly satisfying the client and that they are mere moments away from losing their favor which, as these types of clients believe, will make the service provider more than willing to bend over backwards to do anything and everything the client wants, throwing feasibility or clearly outlined terms of the production agreement to the curb. And moreover, be eternally grateful for the privilege of allowing the client to apply this undue pressure

throughout the entire process.

Toxic clients or not, it is critical to identify actual deadlines up front, so be prepared to engage in as many and as lengthy back-and-forth discussions as necessary to collect this vital piece of the puzzle.



Deadline Ping-Pong

Does the following conversation seem all too familiar?

Client: "How long will it take you to get me the animation?"

You: "When do you need it?"

Client: "Yesterday."

'But if you professionally and politely persist to identify all necessary information up front, your projects will run more smoothly, you'll deliver a better product, your clients will be happier, you'll make more money, and you might even have more fun along the way.'

You: "Can you tell me when you really need it? It would be much easier to establish a date based on your needs."

Client: "Well, how fast can you get it to me?"

You: "I understand you're in a rush and I'm happy to work with your schedule the best I can. What is the latest date possible that will work for you?"

Client: "That depends – how soon can you get it to me?"

And repeat ad nauseam.

Instead of pulling what's left of your hair out

of your head and/or banging it against the nearest brick wall, try this: Interject a date that is probably much later than the client would expect and see if the shock reflex makes them reveal the actual deadline. For example:

Client: "How long will it take you to get me the animation?"

You: "When do you need it?"
Client: "Yesterday."

You: "Can you tell me when you really need it? It would be much easier to establish a date based on your needs."

Client: "Well, how fast can you get it to me?"

You: "I understand you're in a rush and I'm happy to work with your schedule the best I can. What is the latest date possible that will work for you?"

Client: "That depends. How soon can you get it to me?"

You: "Ok, to be honest, I can't commit 100% to this date yet because we haven't discussed the full scope of the project, but I'm guessing three months."

Client: "Three months? I need it in three weeks!"

And they you have it – the true deadline in all its glory. From here you can work backwards to set up preliminary submittal dates, schedule time for client feedback, and for you to perform fixes and revisions.

Persistence for the Win

Client negotiations can be tricky if not downright confusing, even aggravating at times. But if you professionally and politely persist to identify all necessary

information up front, your projects will run more smoothly, you'll deliver a better product, your clients will be happier, you'll make more money, and you might even have more fun along the way.♦

Martin Grebing is president of Funnybone Animation and can be reached at www.funnyboneanimation.com.



A DAY IN THE LIFE

We get to spend a day with the brilliant team at **Magic Light Pictures**, the Oscar-nominated, BAFTA and Emmy-winning production company of specials such as *The Gruffalo*, *Room on the Broom*, *Revolting Rhymes* and *Zog*, as they wrap their latest animated special *The Snail and the Whale*.

Magic Light's new special *The Snail and the Whale* features Rob Brydon, Sally Hawkins and Dame Diana Rigg.

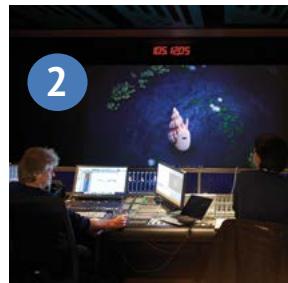


1



8 a.m. A bright and early start to the day! Director Daniel Snaddon chats to producer Michael Rose over coffee.

2



9 a.m. Sound designer Adrian Rhodes goes over the fine details of the sound mix with the directors Daniel Snaddon and Max Lang.

3



8-10 a.m. Max and Daniel are absorbed by the sound mix.

4



10:30 a.m. The Magic Light offices are in full flow! Managing all our development, production, distribution, marketing and licensing.

5



11 a.m. Animation director Jeroen Jaspaert works on character design for our upcoming preschool series, *Pip and Posy*, based on *Gruffalo* illustrator Axel Scheffler's popular books.

6



11:45 a.m. Jeroen meets with animation development producer Vici King to take every detail from the books.

7



12:30 p.m. Planning the BBC One Christmas premiere of *The Snail and the Whale*, brand director Daryl Shute and producer Martin Pope discuss the marketing strategy.

8



2:30 p.m. The team have a quick break with their favorite cuddly toys!

9



2:45 p.m. Before designing the next one! Our Mr. Panda plush to accompany our development of a preschool series based on the books by Steve Antony.

10



3:30 p.m. Michael, Daniel, Max and Martin discuss the final colorful shots in *The Snail and the Whale*.

11

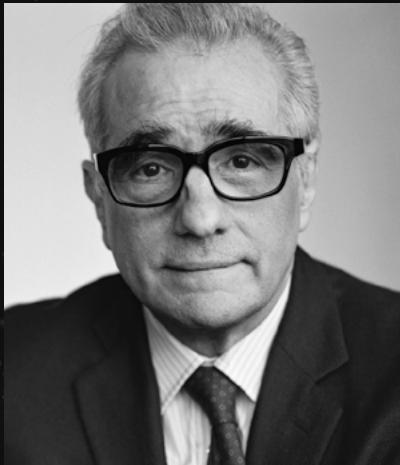


6 p.m. Time to sit back and relax! One last review before the film is delivered to BBC One.



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“‘Toy Story 4’ will blow you away
in ways you won’t be expecting ...
Who would ever believe that toys
could break your heart?”

LOS ANGELES TIMES, Kenneth Turan

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BEST PICTURE

Best Animated Feature

Best Adapted Screenplay

Best Original Song

Disney PIXAR
TOY STORY 4

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